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Teacher Perceptions about Diversity and the Achievement Gap: Understanding the Discursive Construction of Whiteness

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Dedication

In memory of my beautiful grandparents, Daniel y Donelia Montoya and Ramon y Frances Padilla who built the strong foundation we call family and instilled in all of us who are part of our family the power of love, hard work, loyalty and self-lessness. Also in memory of my beautiful brother, Anthony (little Tony) Padilla who believed the sun rose and set in my eyes and who always looked up to me. Not a day goes by that I do not think of my little brother and miss seeing your beautiful smile and hearing your special laugh. You were so thoughtful and generous and loved by so many.

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. This accomplishment was not possible without you. The hard work and sacrifice was not just my own, but shared by you. Thus, this is dissertation is truly OUR accomplishment. I am truly blessed to have a supportive family whose belief in me never falters and whose inspiration has empowered me to spread my wings and soar.

To my husband Dimas: thank you for your tough love, patience, and understanding. They have kept me afloat in the most challenging of times and have made me strong. You are my rock and my inspiration!

Mom and Dad, thank you for being my lifelong role models. Your guidance, love and support have made me the person that I am today. You instilled in me the value of respect and acceptance of others whom we share this planet with. Mom, know that I still remember the times spent with you looking at the stucco in the ceiling and making up stories about the images we saw. You inspired my creativity and inquisitiveness at a very early age and taught me more than how to think out of the box, but that that box did not really exist. Dad, thank you for encouraging me to shoot for the stars. Those hours and hours you spent tutoring me in the wonders of algebra developed my critical thinking and problem-solving and molded me into the researcher I needed to be to carry out this very important work. Because of the two of you, I always strive to do the right thing for the right reasons.

To my children: thank you for allowing me to take the time that it took to complete my dissertation. Devin, Hailey, and Hazal, my beautiful and precious grandchildren, thank you for reminding me what my work is really about. You are our future and are capable of the greatest of things. I believe in you and it is because of you that I continue to do the work that I do.

**TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT DIVERSITY AND THE
ACHIEVEMENT GAP: UNDERSTANDING THE DISCURSIVE
CONSTRUCTION OF WHITENESS**

by

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B.A. Elementary Education, College of Santa Fe, 1991
M.Ed. At-Risk Youth Education, College of Santa Fe, 1996

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Teacher perceptions about diversity and the achievement gap were examined. Participants were alternative teacher licensure candidates at the student teaching phase of their preparation program.   Two-hour individual, in-depth, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants. Additionally, the participants participated in focus groups that engaged them in discourse about the achievement gap (definitions, contributing factors, and solutions). Finally, the participants' submitted written statements related to diversity, multiculturalism and critically reflective practice. Critical discourse analysis of the interview/focus group transcripts and the participants written statements was conducted to identify the underlying ideologies of the participants.

The study yielded three major findings. First, although one of the program's core values was critically reflective practice, critical reflection was approached from a technical or methods-focused construct versus critical reflection leading to critical consciousness. Second, the participants held hegemonic ideologies including meritocracy, individualism, and cultural deficit that may hinder their success with children of color. Finally, the participants' written and oral discourse revealed discursive strategies that detracted from issues of race. These discursive strategies are referred to by Irene Yoon (2012) as *Whiteness-At-Work*. The need for critical multicultural teacher education programs that effectively prepare counter-hegemonic teachers is highlighted through this study.

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Chapter 1

Introduction & Background

When I began my doctoral coursework, I was somewhat naïve in my assumptions about education, social equality, and racism. I was raised to believe that anyone could accomplish anything by working hard. After all, America is the land of opportunity—a place where everyone has access to free public education. My beliefs were aligned with the classic meritocratic ideology that is the myth of pure meritocracy. I was ignorant of terms like social reproduction, oppression, institutional racism, and hegemony. By the time I started my doctoral program, I had been an elementary teacher for six years and a teacher educator for two years. My obliviousness to the educational inequality that existed was attacked head on, beginning with my first encounter with the works of Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*), Jeannie Oakes (*Keeping Track*), and Jean Anyon ("Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work*"). After reading these and other paradigm challenging works in the first year of my doctoral studies, my view of education was never the same. The bubble that encapsulated my comfortable existence and maintained my naiveté was burst. I no longer viewed the world through the same lens that to this point, had served to skew my reality.

Realizing that educational institutions are gateways to power and privilege, I spent thirteen years as a teacher educator developing programs that were built on the mission of preparing critical educators as leaders for transformation. As a result of these experiences, I have developed a sense of humility and awe of the complexity involved in preparing teachers for the realities and challenges of working in diverse and high-need/low-performing schools. It is essential that schools be staffed with critically conscious teachers with ideological and political clarity (Bartolome, 2002, 2008; Bartolome & Balderrama, 2001) who are able to engage in the

critical pedagogy necessary to transform schools. Critically conscious teachers recognize their own power and privilege as well as the oppression and powerlessness of others. In turn, they are willing to face the harsh reality of racism, work to change this reality, and as such contribute to a powerful solidarity around social justice and equality.

The task that I am alluding to—preparing critically conscious teachers with ideological and political clarity—is challenging. As a teacher educator, I witnessed the lack of critical consciousness first hand as pre-service teachers revealed their biases, assumptions, misconceptions, stereotypes, and prejudices towards students, families, and communities of color. When making sense of the achievement gap, they made statements such as "their parents don't value education," or "their culture does not promote literacy." I also witnessed many teachers expressing a "color-blind" approach to discourse around race, ethnicity, and diversity through statements such as "I don't see color" and "I treat all my students the same." Was engaging them in critical reflection and self-examination enough to promote their critical consciousness and was this retained in the long term and observable in their teaching behaviors and practices? Due to a change in employment, I was not able to explore this question with the pre-service teachers with whom I worked. However, my interest in teacher ideology and how it fuels the miseducation (Bartolome, 2002; Crawford, 2008; Haberman, 2005; Orfield, 2004) of historically underrepresented students continues to be a driving force for my work and research.

The intent of this dissertation research was to explore alternatively licensed teachers' perceptions about their diverse students and their preparation for teaching in New Mexico's diverse and high-need/low-performing schools. My hope was to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of teachers working in New Mexico's high need and low-performing schools. A goal was to identify some specific recommendations for teacher preparation

programs and school administrators on how best to prepare and develop teachers to be effective with diverse students. Most importantly, I hoped to learn more about the participants' ideologies, specifically related to the achievement gap that may have an impact on their efficacy as teachers of diverse students.

As a woman of color growing up in rural northern New Mexico, I experienced the educational disparity first hand. Growing up in the valley of Española, we did not have access to the same quality education as the "school up the hill," which served the upper and elite class of scientists, professors, and engineers employed by the Los Alamos National Laboratory. The achievement gap and more importantly the opportunity gap between the "school on the hill" and the "school in the valley" has been in existence for many years, and continues to persist beyond any interventions. Aside from the quality of these schools, a major distinguishing factor between the two school systems is the students are that are being served. The Los Alamos Public Schools serves primarily white students and the Espanola Public Schools serves primarily students of color.

As I look back on my experiences as a student in northern New Mexico schools I would describe my schooling in the tradition of the "banking method" of education (Freire, 1993). I was taught through a rigidly authoritarian framework and I have vivid memories of feeling fearful and intimidated as a learner in classrooms. Critical thinking, problem solving, analysis and other higher level thinking skills were not a major part of my school curriculum and students did not have much voice in the classroom. In fact, my school's curriculum resembled the working class schools Jean Anyon refers to in "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" (Anyon, 1980). As I heard the stories of the participants, the way in which they described their schools reminded me of my own schooling experience.

As I strive to make sense of my "success" as a learner, I believe that I was able to make it through elementary and secondary school because I was timid quiet (i.e., did not challenge authority) and because of my auditory learning style (i.e., I was able to listen to a teacher's lecture, retain it, and regurgitate it via lower-level, selected-response style assessments). As a young learner, I was able to preserve my joy for learning in my free time at school and at home. I had a very creative and inquisitive mind, and I figured out ways to preserve and foster those qualities in myself. Although (somehow) I had the resilience to preserve my own learning and creativity, I realize that many children, who do not fit within the rigid paradigm of traditional schooling, fall through the cracks of an unequal educational system despite their resilience. It is important to be clear that this reference to traditional schooling is tied to the institutionalized racism in the educational system and schools that reproduces inequities.

Another weapon I had in my resilience arsenal was my parents. My mother (a college graduate) was very influential in that she fostered and encouraged my creativity and inquisitiveness. I remember at the age of 3 lying down with her to take a nap and her asking me to identify what shapes I saw in the ceiling stucco and to tell her a story about what I saw. My father, a machinist at the lab, spent countless hours teaching me the wonders of Algebra. My case appears to serve as a classic example of meritocracy. I was someone who attended rural schools with very limited resources and did not have access to a quality education and highly effective teachers, yet my parents valued education and from the dominant narrative of success, we "pulled ourselves up from our boot straps, worked hard, and despite many obstacles, made it." What is missing from this illustration is the privilege that increased my chances of success. A big privilege I was afforded is that I came from a middle class family—my mother was a registered nurse and college graduate and my father was a high school graduate, who worked as

a machinist for the Los Alamos National Laboratory. My parents were advocates for my education and had the resources to support me at home. Because my father had a well-paying job at the labs, my mother was able to work part-time at the hospital and be home when we got home from school each day. This was a huge factor in my ability to excel in school. Not all families have this luxury. I also recognize my own privilege as a light-skinned Hispanic female who was raised speaking only English, which placed me a step above my dark-skinned, Spanish-speaking relatives and classmates.

As an outcome of diverse and high-need/low-performing schools, although I excelled in the traditional schooling model, upon graduation I was not academically prepared to be successful in college or the workplace. Upon entry into higher education, I was ill prepared for the academic rigor of college. In fact, I failed to pass freshman English the first time I took it due to my limited writing proficiency. I also attribute my failure to my English professor who did not have an interest in working with low-performing students. Her belief was that her class served as a "weeding out" process or gatekeeper. I passed freshman English the second time around due to a teacher who had high expectations of students and took personal responsibility for her students' learning. She was able to help me relate writing to the real world and to learn to write in a way that connected with my own experiences. I remember being shocked that it was actually okay to write about my own experiences and that there was actually value in them. College overall was a struggle for me as I lacked the critical thinking, analysis, problem-solving, and cultural literacy needed to be a successful college student. Influential to my decision to become a teacher were my negative experiences as a learner in classrooms, my sense of disappointment in the quality of education that I was afforded, and my desire to do it differently with my students.

I have also experienced the disappointment of schooling and teachers through the experiences of my own children as learners in schools and this had a profound effect on my view of education as a system. My two oldest sons attended the same schools I did but as I advanced in my career and my income increased, I was able to afford to live in a neighborhood that had access to better schools. Despite having access to a quality school in an upper-socioeconomic neighborhood, my third son had negative experiences and struggled to make it through with a high school diploma. He described his teachers as lacking in passion, and compassion. From my standpoint as a parent, I believe that the cultural/racial mismatch of the teachers who were predominantly white, middle class, females created a disconnect between them and the students hindering their ability to establish authentic relationships that are essential to effective teaching and learning. These teachers lacked the ability to relate to students of cultures different from their own. In one instance, his computer teacher took him to his counselor and said, "I do not want him in my class. I do not want to teach him. Put him in another class," to which his counselor complied without challenge or question. In other instances, he was the victim of racism witnessed by teachers and other school personnel who overlooked the actions of the offenders who happened to be outstanding students and athletes from the upper-class neighborhoods. Their perception was that my son was an outsider, *just* one of the minority students who transferred into our school from those *other* schools. And, the assumption was that he must have done something to deserve being treated that way. Racism was a reality in this school but was swept under the rug by teachers and administrators who lacked critical consciousness and an inability to act in the best interests of students of color.

As I reflect on my third son's difficulty in school, I have to ask myself how he is different from my two older sons who, although they struggled academically, were able to "get through"

without conflict. However, I must note that their "getting through" does not equate with their learning or achieving academic excellence. Similar to my own experience, they graduated with low-level skills and had to engage in remediation at the college level. At the root of my third son's difficulties was his sense of injustice, marginalization, and his inability to find purpose and meaning (i.e., connect with and find relevance in the curriculum) in school. He engaged in oppositional behavior as *resistance* to his perceived injustice. As such, rather than assimilate he chose to battle the injustice. Although he knew that the way he dressed would lead to stereotypes and bullying, he refused to dress like the dominant students, clinging to his sense of identity at all costs. His choice not to assimilate earned many labels, and for uncritical educators he fit well into the stereotype of minority students as underachieving, devaluing education, and culturally deficient.

By the age of fourteen my youngest son had been attending a high performing school in an upper socioeconomic neighborhood since the sixth grade. The education he experienced was quite different from that of my two eldest sons because he had access to rigorous curriculum/standards, highly effective teachers, and a resource rich academic and social learning environment. However, as a minority attending a school that serves a high percentage of white and upper socioeconomic status students, he experienced similar challenges to my third son. Having transferred into this school at a younger age, he was able to assimilate much easier than his brother. Although he experienced stereotyping (e.g., low expectations) as a high academic achiever and an athlete, he was able to "fit in" better with his peers. In addition, his resilience, self-confidence, and sense of humor all served to "brush off" some of the racist treatment to which he has been exposed and keep his "eye on the prize" (i.e., earning a high-school diploma and going on to college). I also believe that his physical characteristics veiled his ethnicity

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somewhat and served to shield him from the standard stereotypes and low expectations yielded by teachers. Despite these countering factors, my son still ended up transferring to another school in Albuquerque that served a more diverse student population. And, although not equivalent in quality, he felt a sense of belonging and was more comfortable and content in that environment. Although my older sons were more "successful" in school, their success came at a cost. Unfortunately their ability to assimilate equates with a loss of language, culture, and identity that cannot easily be recovered. They were also positioned on the "border" where they do not exactly fit in with their own culture and will never fully fit in with the dominant culture.

All of this brings me to the realization that education is contextual and that there are no golden rules, shining armor, or silver bullets to the problems of an unequal educational system for at the root of it is deep seated racism that has become ingrained and institutionalized. However, a common theme through my education and through the education of my sons has been the impact that teachers can make, whether positive or negative in the lives of students. Their beliefs about the world, teaching and learning, students, themselves, and the education system shape their approach to teaching and the resulting impact they have on student learning. More importantly, their ideologies, as precursors to beliefs, shape teacher behaviors and practices, which in turn impact student learning. Their level of preparedness, which earlier I equated with critical consciousness and the ability to apply critical and counter-hegemonic pedagogy; will determine the degree to which they will be successful as teachers in diverse and high-need/low performing schools. As teachers in these schools, preserving learning in their classrooms despite all of the challenges and obstacles they will face will ultimately save the lives of the students they teach.

Statement of the Problem

The struggle to provide equal educational opportunities for low-income students of color in the U.S. is more significant than ever. The historical and "persisting miseducation of low-income children of color" (Bartolome, 2002; Crawford, 2008; Haberman, 2005; Orfield, 2004) and the resulting achievement gap is the overriding problem that this study addresses. The significant gap in achievement between whites and low-income children of color (Haberman, 2005; Haskins & Loeb, 2007; Haycock et al., 2001; Marx, 2006) stems from the fact that low-income children of color are more likely to attend substandard schools and be taught by unqualified teachers (Rodríguez, 2008). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2000), over 7% of white students dropped out of high schools compared to 13 % of African American students and 27% of Latina/os. And, whites continue to outperform African Americans and Latinas/os in reading and math at every grade level (Wirt et al., 2003). By the end of grade four, African American, Latino, and poor students of all races are already behind other students. By the time they reach grade eight they are about three years behind (Haycock et al., 2001).

Racism is deeply ingrained in society and by extension, public education. As such it must be central in making sense of the achievement gap. The achievement gap is really an opportunity gap that is the result of power relations and structural inequity. In essence, there exists a "caste system of public education that metes out educational opportunity based on wealth and privilege, rather than on student or community needs" (Peske & Haycock, 2006, p. 15). Teachers can serve to maintain this caste system or to dismantle it depending on their ideologies and levels of critical consciousness. Teachers who hold hegemonic ideologies have the potential to undermine the success of students of color. Because "colorblind ideologies and false notions

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of meritocracy still pervade schooling processes" (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011, p. 1347) it is important that teacher education programs be structured to expose and dismantle hegemonic ideologies and replace them with counter-hegemonic ones. This will ensure a more liberating and empowering education for historically marginalized students who otherwise are positioned for failure within a system that operates on the ideology of whiteness.

To make authentic sense of the achievement gap, seemingly apolitical mainstream explanations for minority student underachievement (i.e., deficit and cultural explanations grounded in meritocratic ideologies) must be exposed and interrogated. Moreover it is important to "recognize the powerful ways that race and racism shape and affect equity in schooling and can impede efforts toward closing the achievement gap" (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011, p. 1347). As such, it is important to critically examine the ideological and political dimensions of minority education (Bartolome & Balderrama, 2001). To accomplish this, a critical race theoretical framework must be applied in examining how educational theory and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). This begins with our understanding of the most important factor influencing student learning—the teacher (Ding & Sherman, 2006; Haberman, 1995; Haskins & Loeb, 2007; Haycock, 1998; Sanders, 2000).

Countering inequity in the educational system is no small task. Although there are numerous factors that influence student learning, it is well known that effective teachers can make a big difference in terms of narrowing the achievement gap. Yet, our public education system continues to allow students growing up in poverty, students of color and low-performing students to be disproportionately taught by inexperienced, under-qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Peske & Haycock, 2006) in under-resourced and low-quality schools. The students that need the best teachers are most often the "victims" of low-quality instruction

administered by the least-qualified and least effective teachers (Haberman, 2005). On average, least-effective teachers produce gains of about 14 percentile points during the school year and, by contrast, the most effective teachers post gains among low-achieving students that average 53 percentile points (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). The difference between an effective teacher and an ineffective teacher can translate into a full level of achievement in one school year (Hanushek, 1992). According to Haycock (1998), if poor and minority children had teachers of the same quality teachers as other children, about half of the achievement gap would disappear, and if we assigned the best teachers to the children that need them the most, we could entirely close the achievement gap. Although I agree that teacher quality is important, I believe there is much more to being an effective teacher in a racialized society where schools serve as sorting mechanisms maintaining the hierarchal structures and preserving whiteness. As such, it will take much more than providing children of color with access to high quality teachers. Teachers must be critically conscious, having gone through the process of unlearning racism and positioned to engage in transformative counter-hegemonic pedagogy. Any reform efforts aimed at improving the education of diverse students and closing the achievement gap must take into account the powerful potential of teachers to make a difference among the many other factors that impact student learning and achievement.

If staffing high-need schools with highly effective teachers is the best engine for driving school reform (Haberman & Post, 1998), it is critical that we not only work towards reform that allows disadvantaged students to be taught by high quality teachers, but also to develop a better understanding of what it means to be an "effective" teacher. A "one-size-fits-all" definition of teacher effectiveness does not exist. Because "teaching is a complex activity that occurs within webs of social, historical, cultural, and political significance" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 14), it is

essential that teacher educators and educational researchers avoid an overemphasis on teacher knowledge, skills, and methods in defining and making sense of teacher effectiveness. Developing a comprehensive understanding of teacher effectiveness must include the examination and interrogation of teacher ideology, as critically conscious teachers with ideological and political clarity are more likely to increase the chances of academic success of subordinated minority students (Bartolome, 2002). In pointing out the challenge of the adequate preparation of the overwhelmingly white, female, and middle-class pre-service teachers to work with subordinated students of color and poverty, Bartolome (2002) states that "the dramatic increase in low-income, non-white, and language minority students in U.S. public schools signals an urgent need to understand and challenge the ideological and political orientations of prospective teachers in teacher education programs" (p. 167).

To effectively address the issues of inequity in schooling, teachers must be well prepared to teach in complex social contexts (e.g., diverse high-need/low performing schools). This is challenging as diverse, low-performing schools are the most impacted by the teacher shortage and they struggle with even the basic challenge of staffing classrooms. These schools need more than "warm bodies" in their classrooms; they need critically conscious teachers who will respond justly to the challenges they and the students they serve face. Above and beyond teachers being prepared to meet the academic needs of their students, teachers need to "understand and capitalize on the contextual factors that influence students' lives inside and outside of schools" (Rodríguez, 2008, p. 292). At minimum, teachers need to leave teacher preparation programs with cultural competence and the ability to apply culturally sensitive and responsive teaching strategies to their practice. However, for true transformation to take place, teachers must realize their roles as counter-hegemonic teachers who challenge the unjust structures, policies and

practices in schools that undermine the success of students of color. Further, they need to transcend the conservative and liberal multicultural frameworks that serve as the cornerstone of most teacher education programs and promote an overly simplistic and naïve view of the wider and social cultural power relations (McLaren, 1994). To become anti-racist teachers, they need to develop a critical multicultural perspective that will serve as a tool in subverting racism (Nylund, 2006). Empowered with a critical lens, they will see whiteness as the "every day, invisible, subtle, cultural and social practices, ideas and codes that discursively secure the power and privilege of white people, but that strategically remains unmarked, unnamed, and unmapped in contemporary society" (Shome, 1996, p. 503).

It is important to develop a deeper understanding of what "effective teaching" means in the complex social contexts of diverse high-need/low-performing schools, where subordinated students continue to be the victims of unequal and inferior schooling. To be effective, teachers must have a critical understanding of power relations and structural inequalities in society. They also need to recognize the ideology of whiteness that permeates schools and fuels inequity and the resultant achievement gap. In order for teachers to forge authentic relationships with diverse student populations that provide an adequate foundation for learning, they must understand the experiences of subordinated students and the potential role that teachers can play in perpetuating the inequities in education that continue to oppress students—a role steeped in hegemonic ideology and a lack of the critical consciousness that makes liberating teaching and learning practices impossible.

The demographic or racial mismatch between teachers and students is a factor that cannot be overlooked in the preparation of teachers. Despite demographic shifts and dramatic increases in the number of students of color, the majority of teachers continue to be white middle-class

females (Banks, 2001; Bartolome, 2008; Coopersmith & Gruber, 2009; Cross, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001; National Education Association, 2003). Also problematic is that "most teacher educators are like their students: limited in cross-cultural experiences and understanding, and culturally encapsulated" (Le Roux & Moller, 2002, p. 184). To meet federal mandates as well as state and national accreditation standards, teacher education programs are charged with the identification of skills and dispositions for pre-service teachers including the commitment to teach in schools that serve linguistically and culturally diverse students. Placing pre-service teachers in early field experiences in diverse school settings has been viewed as a way to immerse them in complex social contexts where they can gain experience with diverse student populations and develop their capacity to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Field experiences in diverse settings have the potential to produce a positive effect on pre-service teacher dispositions towards working with diverse students, helping them to gain an understanding of cultural diversity, and pushing them to question the social inequities they witness in these settings (Baldwin et al., 2007). However, for those pre-service teachers who enter with negative stereotypes towards diverse students, field experiences in culturally diverse settings may actually reinforce participants' negative stereotypes, attitudes, and a reluctance to work in those settings (Haberman & Post, 1998).

Although teacher education programs are charged with preparing teachers to work with increasingly diverse student populations, this is often addressed in superficial ways, which miss the mark in terms of preparing critically conscious teachers who are ready to act as change agents in diverse and high-need/low performing schools.

Initial teacher training, as far as multicultural education is concerned is grossly inadequate or, in many instances non-existent. In many cases it is regarded as a luxury

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which cannot be afforded in a time of scarcity of resources, or as a contentious politically

sensitive area best to be avoided. In both initial and in service training courses where

multicultural issues are addressed, the training focus tends to be on multiculturalism

rather than on race and educational issues. (Le Roux & Moller, 2002, p. 185)

Additionally, most teacher preparation programs approach the education of historically

marginalized students in technical or methods-focused ways that "frame schooling as politically

neutral spaces and disconnected from the social, political, economic, and historical context in

which they exist" (Rodríguez, 2008). Typically, the "diversity treatment" is delivered via the

"token diversity course," whereby pre-service teachers superficially scan the topic of diversity

and as such do not develop the political and ideological clarity necessary for critically conscious

teaching. As a result, "preservice and practicing teachers too often emerge from teacher

education programs having unconsciously absorbed assimilationist, white supremacist, and

deficit views of nonwhite and low-income students" (Bartolome, 2008, p. xv). A more critical

approach to preparing teachers to work in diverse settings is in order—one that entails the

interrogation of ideology, especially in programs where pre-service teachers will go on to teach

in the most diverse and high-need/low performing schools (Bartolome & Balderrama, 2001;

Rodríguez, 2008).

Without critical consciousness, rather than contributing to the narrowing of the

achievement gap, uncritical teachers may serve to further perpetuate ideologies that may not be

applicable to students who have been historically neglected by the educational system

(Rodríguez, 2008). The persistence of inequity is often unconsciously or silently perpetuated

(Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Uncritical educators harbor ideologies that are symptomatic of what King

(1991) refers to as "dysconscious racism" to denote the limited and distorted understandings that

pre-service teachers have about diversity and inequity that make it difficult for them to act in favor of truly equitable education. For example, in making sense of the failure of minority and low-income students, teachers may ascribe to deficit-oriented perspectives through which communities of color are viewed as culturally deficient because their norms and values differ from white middle-class norms and values (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

> If they [teachers] enter the field of education with unexamined and uncontested notions of racelessness, individualism, and false pretenses about meritocracy, they may well adapt to a culture that encourages them to harbor and perpetuate beliefs that are counterproductive to the success of historically marginalized groups.   (Rodríguez, 2008, p. 304)

Through the teacher preparation experience, pre-service teachers' internalized ideologies and their uncritical acceptance of the dominant conservative and liberal ideologies that detract from racism or serve to justify and maintain inequity must be challenged. High-need/low performing schools that serve predominantly minority and low-income students depend on teacher education programs to provide the experiential opportunities that pre-service teachers need to become critically conscious. Such opportunities must probe them to identify, reflect on, and evaluate the "ideological influences that shape their thinking about schooling, society, themselves, and diverse others" (King, 1991, p. 143) and go through the process of unlearning racism. It is critical to our growth and vitality as a nation that we adequately staff our nation's diverse and high-need/low-performing schools with highly-effective teachers. As such, the examination of teacher ideology is critical to developing a more comprehensive understanding of teacher effectiveness. To be truly effective, teachers must not only have deep content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge and skills. They must also develop critical consciousness that

provides the foundation for transformative and counter-hegemonic pedagogy. Only then can they act as change agents, cultural workers (Freire, 1998), and cultural brokers (Bartolome, 2002) with the power to counter racism and inequity in schools.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore alternatively licensed teachers' perceptions about diverse students, their roles as teachers in diverse high-need/low-performing schools, and their preparedness for teaching in diverse high-need/low-performing schools in New Mexico. My intent was to examine their ideologies related to the challenges of teaching in complex social contexts as well as how they make sense of and approach these challenges in their respective environments. Through ideological critique, I wanted to uncover any hegemonic ideologies held by the participants about diversity that could serve to undermine the education of student of color and further perpetuate racism and inequality.

"In 1969, Smith's *Teachers for the Real World* revealed that teachers enter classrooms unprepared to effectively teach diverse students of poverty" (Zeichner & Melnick, 1998, p. 88). Today, little has changed and most teacher education programs promote a conservative/monocultural or liberal/pluralistic approach and "perpetuate teaching practices that have historically benefitted white-middle class students, thus failing to address the learning needs of those from cultural or ethnic origins other than the mainstream culture" (Le Roux & Moller, 2002, p. 185). "Teachers still too often construct indigenous and other minoritized students in deficit terms, with inevitable negative consequences for their longer-term academic success" (May & Sleeter, 2010, p. 3). There is an urgent need for additional research that identifies teachers' ideologies and explores the possible harmful effects of uncritical and narrow ideological beliefs systems (Giroux, 1983). There is also limited research that theorizes about

how teachers learn about diversity (Bell et al., 2007). This study addressed the gaps in research in relation to teacher ideology and how teachers learn to teach in diverse contexts. Although there continues to be efforts to examine teacher beliefs and attitudes, "there have been few systematic attempts to examine the political and ideological dimensions of educators' 'beliefs,' and 'assumptions,' and 'unconscious perceptions,' and how these world views are part of a larger ideological orientation" (Bartolome & Balderrama, 2001, p. 51). Bartolome (2008) addresses the disconnect in the literature between teacher beliefs/attitudes and ideology. She writes,

> Indeed, in the literature teachers' beliefs and attitudes tend to be treated as apolitical, overly psychologized constructs that magically spring from the earth and 'merely' reflect personality types, individual values, and personal predispositions that have little to do with the existing social order in terms of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and so on, and whether or not their views influence how they treat and teach subordinated students. Moreover, it has not yet been acknowledged that teachers' conscious and unconscious beliefs and attitudes regarding the legitimacy of the greater social order and the resulting unequal power relations among various cultural groups at the school and classroom level are significant factors to take into account in order to improve educational processes and outcomes of minority education. (pp. xv)

Research Questions

The following questions will be explored through a critical race theoretical framework:

Overriding Question: What ideologies undergird the thinking of alternatively licensed teachers who work with diverse students in high-need/low-performing schools in New Mexico?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the perceptions that alternatively licensed teachers have about the diverse students they teach in high-need/low-performing schools in New Mexico?

2. How do alternatively licensed teachers perceive their preparedness for teaching diverse students in high-need/low-performing schools?

3. How do alternatively licensed teachers construct meaning and understanding of the phenomena of race, ethnicity, racism and whiteness and to what aspects of their preparation experience do they attribute these perceptions, meanings, and understandings?

Definition of Key Terms

Alternative Licensure/Alternative Certification: For purposes of this study, I will use the definition provided by the National Center for Alternative Certification: "alternatives to the traditional state-approved college-based teacher education program routes for certifying teachers" (Feistritzer, 2010, p. 14)

Ideology: Refers to the framework of thought used by members of a society to justify or rationalize an existing social order (Bartolome & Balderrama, 2001).

High-Need School: A school with more than 30 percent of its enrollment from low-income families, based on eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch subsidies.[1]

Low-Performing Schools: Schools in improvement, corrective action or restructuring in which the data indicate that overall student achievement is extremely low and little or no progress has occurred over a number of years.[2]

Limitations to the Study

A limitation of this study is that the participants are representative of only non-traditionally licensed teachers who have obtained licenses through an alternative licensure route. Between 2007 and 2012, a total of 8,682 level-one teaching licenses were issued (A. Moll, personal communication, November 26, 2012). Of those licenses issued, 1,080 (12%) were issued through an alternative licensure pathway (A. Moll, personal communication, November 26, 2012). I chose to focus on alternatively licensed teachers because in New Mexico as in many other states, a significant number of teachers are prepared through an alternative route. And, as with all new teachers, they end up teaching in high-need/low-performing schools. In New Mexico, many teacher candidates are employed as teachers while they are completing their programs of study. As such, most of these teachers are learning about diversity through their experiences as student teachers in high-need/low-performing schools serving diverse groups of students.

A second limitation is that I focused on the participants' perceptions and ideologies and did not observe the participants in classrooms to tie their ideologies to their classroom practices. I chose instead to focus on their perceptions about diverse students in high-need schools and how

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[1] State of New Mexico Notice of Government Source Fund Allocations, Office of the Governor, November, 2009
[2] State of New Mexico Notice of Government Source Fund Allocations, Office of the Governor, November, 2009

these perceptions are formed, maintained, and reinforced through their informal and formal preparation and their immersion and social interactions in the schools in which they teach. This understanding is critical as teacher educators strive to develop programs that will better prepare teachers for working with diverse and historically subordinated students in diverse high-need/low-performing schools.

A third limitation is that I did not interview program faculty. I chose to focus on the participants' perceptions and their experience in the program in order to capture the program from this angle. The next level of this study would be to interview faculty to see whether they hold the same ideologies as the participants and whether their perceptions of diversity and the achievement gap are aligned with the program's philosophy and conceptual framework. Capturing how the faculty approach diversity and multiculturalism in their curriculum and courses will be an important addition to the literature and would provide insights into developing critical multicultural teacher education programs and the recruitment, selection and professional development of faculty as integral to the efficacy of these programs.

Methodology

Because this was a study of teacher ideology, I chose to follow a critical qualitative methodological framework applying ideology critique and critical discourse analysis (Leonardo & Allen, 2008). This study aligns with the concept that research is a problem of meaning (Leonardo & Allen, 2008). "How meaning is represented in research and the political consequences around the terms of the debate are central concerns for critical qualitative research at the intersection of ideology and meaning" (Leonardo & Allen, 2008, p. 417).

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions teachers hold about diverse students and uncover their ideologies through ideology critique and critical discourse analysis. The

participants were candidates in an alternative licensure program completing their student teaching requirement. As a requirement of student teaching, these individuals were enrolled in a student teaching seminar that required them to engage in reflection and critique of their respective teaching experiences. Infused in the program's curriculum and core to the faculty's focus on instruction are the core values of diversity and multicultural perspectives. The student teachers are expected to engage in "critically reflective practice" resulting in the ultimate goal of them becoming effective teachers of diverse students.

I conducted a critical discourse analysis of the participants' reflective writings related to diversity, including an entry-level diversity statement and an end of program reflection on the core values of the program. I also conducted in depth individual interviews that focused on their perceptions about diversity, diverse students and their preparedness for teaching in diverse and high-need/low-performing schools. After all of the individual interviews were conducted, I facilitated three focus groups (five participants per focus group). The focus group questions were designed to target the participants' perceptions about the achievement gap, their roles in closing versus perpetuating the gap, and the causes of the gap. I structured the focus group around the topic of the achievement gap because I believe that this topic would serve to make the participants' ideologies visible through their discourse. Because this particular program embraces a mission of preparing teachers with the core values of diversity and multiculturalism and has a social justice focus, information about the participants' ideologies could be used to inform the program as it strives to meet the goal of preparing effective teachers who are likely to be placed in diverse high-need and low-performing schools in New Mexico.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study is based on the premise that many of the educational challenges of subordinated students are rooted in typically unacknowledged discriminatory and hegemonic ideologies, (Bartolome, 2008) and that any reforms that aim to improve the education of subordinated students must address ideologies in education. The purpose of this study was to examine the ideologies that undergird the work of alternatively licensed teachers who work with diverse students in high-need/low-performing schools in New Mexico. The interviews and focus groups were structured to explore the participants' perceptions about the diversity, diverse students and their preparedness for teaching diverse students in complex social contexts and examine the ideologies that emerge within their discourse around the achievement gap. In particular, I was interested in how teachers make sense of inequity and the achievement gap, whether they recognize policies and practices within the educational system and their respective schools that perpetuate the subordination of students of color, and how they situate themselves as teachers within diverse high-need and low-performing schools.

This chapter provides a review of the educational research literature that informed this study. The topics addressed are: the achievement gap (miseducation); racial/cultural mismatch; ideologies in education; racism (dysconcious, passive, and unlearning); hegemonic ideologies; and teacher education and multicultural education. Note that the key search terms used for this review were: ideology; teacher ideology; teacher beliefs; cultural relevance; cultural responsiveness; culturally relevant teaching; culturally responsive teaching; critical consciousness; critical race theory and education; critical race theory in education; achievement gap; race gap; effective teaching; teacher efficacy and achievement gap; and teacher expectations.

Achievement Gap and Miseducation:

There is little disagreement that students of color earn lower grades, drop out school at higher rates, and attain less education than white students, but there is much disagreement about the reasons for these differences that create the achievement gap (Mickelson, 1990). How individuals and groups define and make sense of the achievement gap can reveal much about their underlying beliefs about students of color and their families. The reality is that the achievement gap is a complex phenomenon comprised of multiple inequities related to teacher quality, teacher training, funding, digital divide, wealth and income, affordable housing, health care, nutrition, educational, and quality child care among many others (Milner, 2010). Underlying these structural inequities is historical, persisting, and systemic racism[3] that is institutionalized in schools as a microcosm of society. The unequal educational system is structured around an ideology of whiteness, that is invisible, remains unnamed and operates to the advantage of whites and to the disadvantage of people of color (Tatum, 1999). This study focuses on the gaps (inequities) related to teacher quality, effectiveness, and preparedness. Quality, effectiveness, and preparedness are defined not only in regards to content knowledge and pedagogical skills, but also in direct relation to the ideology of whiteness, which influences how educators construct beliefs about and work with historically marginalized students in complex social contexts (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011).

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[3] Racism refers to "a system of advantage based on race" (Tatum, 1999, p. 7) that benefits Whites and takes into account the "United States' history of slavery and racial inequality that has always privileged Whites as it has denigrated people of color" (Marx, 2006, p. 4).

At the crux of the achievement gap is an education gap[4] or grave inequities in the

American educational system, fueled by the miseducation (Bartolome, 2002; Crawford, 2008;

Haberman, 2005; Orfield, 2004) of teachers (lack of preparation of a predominantly white and

female pre-service teacher population for teaching diverse students in complex social contexts)

and the corresponding miseducation of the students of color these teachers serve. Ladson-

Billings (2006) challenges the notion of an *achievement gap* instead emphasizing the *education*

debt that the system owes to the miseducated (poor and minority students) who have been

inadequately served in American public schools. The achievement gap cannot be adequately

understood unless hegemonic ideologies that fuel racism and inequity set the stage for a deeper

analysis and more accurate interpretation of this phenomenon. Critical analysis and interrogation

of predominant interpretations (e.g., deficit thinking) of the achievement gap reveals that one of

the major reasons poor and minority children underachieve is "because the schools that are

supposed to serve them actually *shortchange* them in the one resource they most need to reach

their potential—high-quality teachers…when it comes to distribution of the best teachers, poor

and minority students do not get their fair share" (Peske & Haycock, 2006, p. 1). Unequal access

to high quality teachers is a major factor in the stratification of educational opportunity

(Ingersoll, 2004) and as such, access to highly qualified teachers should be central to any reform

efforts aimed at closing the achievement gap.

The recruitment, preparation, and retention of highly qualified teachers in the midst of a

critical teacher shortage presents grave challenges for all schools, but the impact is especially

detrimental to high-need/low performing schools that serve diverse students of poverty. Twenty-

five percent of new teachers leave the classroom after just one year, almost half within five years

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[4] The education gap is "characterized by disparities in opportunities, resources, and achievement across
class, language, cultural, and racial groups" (Gresson III, 2008, p. 3)

and for high poverty schools, teacher attrition is 50% higher than in low-poverty schools (Ingersoll, 2003). A major contributor to the high turnover of teachers is the common practice of placing beginning teachers in the most challenging assignments with minimal support. "New teachers are often placed in the schools serving the poorest students and those who have failed to benefit from schooling, so the students with the greatest educational needs find themselves taught by the teachers least prepared to teach them" (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 17). Staffing high-need/low-performing schools with highly qualified teachers is only part of the challenge when the meaning of *highly qualified* and *well prepared* to teach in the intricately complex social contexts of diverse and high-need/low-performing schools is examined through a critical lens. "Initial teacher preparation as far as multicultural education is concerned is grossly inadequate or, in many instances, non-existent" (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Le Roux, 1998, p. 184; Levine, 2006). As a result, most teachers enter the classroom gravely underprepared to work effectively with diverse student populations (Abrams & Moio, 2009). With liberal multiculturalism as the predominant framework of teacher education programs, preparing teachers for diverse classrooms is approached as superficial, fragmented, tokenistic and trivial 'celebrations of diversity (Ladson-Billings, 1998) or as an add-on to traditionally dominant culture-oriented curriculum. These "institutional practices have effectively managed to spawn an entire generation of teachers who have no understanding of the situation or needs of ethnic minority children (Le Roux & Moller, 2002, p. 184).

Demographic imperative and mismatch

Preparing teachers well to teach in diverse contexts is especially challenging in light of the "demographic imperative" (Banks, 2001). The demographic imperative refers to the "enormous gap between who prepares teachers, who the teachers themselves are, and who they

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will likely teach" (Cross, 2003, p. 204). This gap stems from the demographic shifts (increasing diversity) in American P-12 student populations in relation to the stagnant homogeneous demographics of teachers and teacher educators, and contributes to the "disparities deeply embedded in the American educational system" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 4). While 42% of the American student population are people of color, 90% of American teachers are white (Hoffman, 2003). Compounding this great divide is the growing percentage of students who speak a language other than English at home (17% by 1999) compared to 97% of teachers who are monolingual (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996). In addition, 86% of prospective teachers (teacher education students) and 88% of full-time teacher education faculty are white (Ladson-Billings, 2001; National Education Association, 2003). These contrasting demographics combined with the education gap create the demographic imperative and what is referred to as the *racial/cultural mismatch,* which is one of the most critical challenges that beginning teachers face (Boyer, 1996). In working to diminish the education gap and inequity in our nation's schools, the racial/cultural mismatch between teachers, teacher educators and student in our nation's schools must be taken into account.

The reality that many teachers have minimal experience with cultures different from their own (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 78) and that many teacher education programs are ill equipped to prepare teachers for teaching in diverse contexts (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Le Roux & Moller, 2002; Levine, 2006) adds additional urgency to the demographic imperative. The pervasive racial/cultural mismatch*,* leads to a significant detachment of white teacher educators and white pre-service teachers from children of color and impacts what children of color will [or will not] learn (Cross, 2003). In describing how the racial/cultural mismatch impacts teaching, Gay (1995) writes,

The fact that many students [pre-service teachers] do not share the same ethnic, social, racial and linguistic backgrounds as their students may lead to cultural incongruences in the classroom which can mediate against educational effectiveness. These incompatibilities are evident in value orientation, behavioral norms, expectations, styles, social interactions, self-presentation, communication and cognitive processing. (pp. 159)

Without interventions at the pre-service levels, teachers will continue to enter schools underprepared to teach. These underprepared teachers can serve to maintain the status quo and even perpetuate racism and inequality as they lack awareness of whiteness as an ideology that impacts their work with and the success of diverse students (Martin, 2008).

The technical focus of many teacher education programs fails to address the implications of racial/cultural mismatch and further contributes to the under preparedness or miseducation of teachers which then leads to the miseducation of students. Technical approaches to teacher education are deracialized and "frame schooling as politically neutral spaces and disconnected from the social, political, economic, and historical contexts in which they exist," (Rodríguez, 2008, p. 292). Further, "colorblind ideologies and false notions of meritocracy still pervade schooling processes" and teachers prepared through technical approaches are more prone to developing these ideologies thus intensifying the mismatch between teachers and students. As a result, there is a great disconnect between the way pre-service teachers are trained and the realities they will face in schools that serve historically marginalized students. "When the cultures of students and teachers are not synchronized, someone loses out, invariably it is the students" (Gay, 1997).

The demographic imperative and racial/cultural mismatch requires a reconceptualization of teacher education programs and in-service teacher professional development to ensure that

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teachers develop a deep awareness of "their own ideological orientations about cultural, linguistic, and class differences" and "comprehend that teaching is not a politically or ideologically neutral undertaking (Bartolome, 2002, p. 168). Effectively preparing teachers who will be successful with diverse students will require a paradigm shift in teacher education (Irvine, 2009; Milner, 2010) towards critical multicultural teacher education where a core curriculum goal is to critically analyze whiteness and destabilize and to disrupt its persistent legacy of racism (Nylund, 2006). Any reforms in teacher education, that aim to strengthen teachers' capacity to work effectively with diverse students, must transcend conservative and liberal frameworks that promote assimilationist models "in which white is posited as 'an invisible norm by which other ethnicities are judged' hence reinforcing the hegemony of whiteness (McLaren, 1994, p. 49). Such models fail at exposing "every day, invisible, subtle, cultural and social practices, ideas and codes that discursively secure the power and privilege of white people, but that strategically remains unmarked, unnamed, and unmapped in contemporary society" (Shome, 1996, p. 503). While predominantly, cultural diversity classes are taught from the liberal multicultural framework that "precludes power analysis and a critical discussion of whiteness, (Nylund, 2006, p. 27) in order to strategically "counter racism and white supremacist ideologies, liberalism is not a mechanism for substantive, real change" (Ladson-Billings, 1998). To become racially equitable (Earick, 2009) and liberating teaching, they have to develop critical consciousness. In essence, it is not sufficient to equip teachers with skills or competencies for culturally relevant teaching. Le Roux and Moller (2002) capture the essence teacher emphasizing the importance of the teacher-student relationship:

> Achieving qualified teacher status should imply becoming a reflective and empathetic
> educational practitioner who at all times will be alert and sensitive to the needs of all

students. The real foundation for effective teaching is the relationship between the

teacher and student based on mutual trust, sensitivity, understanding and the needs of

each individual student. This relationship is not based on measurable outcomes or the

subject curriculum expertise of the teacher, but on demonstrated respect and

acknowledgement of diversity by someone who values being different as an asset, rather

than a hindrance. (p. 187)

Above and beyond addressing the needed competencies, skills and dispositions, teacher

education must attack ideology head on and engage teachers in the intense critical reflection and

ideological critique that will help them to replace hegemonic ideologies with those that negate

racism and inequity. An essential goal of reform-oriented teacher education programs will need

to be preparing critically conscious teachers equipped with "permanently critical attitudes"

(Freire, 1973, p. 4).

Ideologies in education:

"Ideology" as a term was invented by ideologues of the French Enlightenment. Referred

to as the science of ideas, ideology was first studied during the French Revolution by Antoine

Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836) and was first used in public in 1796. Decades later, Karl Marx

formulated his own version of ideology as false consciousness viewed as a distortion of reality

and something that individuals needed to overcome. Historically and today, ideology as a

concept has been viewed in a negative light, associated with false consciousness and even

avoided by researchers (Leonardo & Allen, 2008).

Throughout the literature, the term "ideology" is defined in wide and varied ways all of

which are helpful in striving to better understand the phenomenon (Eagleton, 1991). Dale (1986)

refers to ideology as a "conceptual chameleon" in that "the range of its meanings is so varied and

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so colored by its theoretical surroundings, that its main value no longer may be as an explanatory category, but as a kind of Rorschach pattern, an indirect indicator through which we can read deep-seated beliefs and values about knowledge and politics held by those who employ the concept" (Burbules, 1992, p. 7). Sharp and Green (1975) define ideology as "ideas and assumptions about the nature of knowledge" and "beliefs about motivation, learning, and educability" (pp. 68). Further, Ideologies represent a version of the world that helps people make sense of their circumstances (McLaren & Giarelli, 1995, p. 53). Leonardo (2003a) refers to ideology as a "necessary network of sense-making strategies that enables people to establish meaning from their lives" (pp. 35) and asserts that "if we are concerned with reforming schools, then educators must forge a language of critique around not only how students and teachers forge their meanings [ideologies], but how these meanings in turn form their subjectivities" (pp. 38).

For purposes of this study, ideology is best understood within a framework of power and "relations of domination" (Lipman, 1997). "If teacher preparation is to make schools more liberatory, then it will need to be intimately linked with a critique of how dominant interests are played out in schools and how existing relations of domination are reproduced" (Lipman, 1997, p. 33). Within the framework of relations of domination, Bartolome (2008) refers to ideology as the framework of thought constructed and held by members of a society to justify or rationalize an existing social order" (p. xiii). More specifically, Bartolome (2008) refers to "hegemonic ideology" as "the power of the ruling class to overpower and eradicate competing views and become, in effect, the commonsense view of the world" (pp. xiii). Hegemonic ideology characterizes the predominant uncritical view of the general public in the America in regards to racism and inequity. For example, racism is seen as a problem of the past that has been resolved and the structure of American society (including the educational system) is viewed as inherently

fair and equal. Also within the framework of relations of domination, Eagleton (1991) refers to the study of ideology as examining the ways in which "meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 5) citing John B. Thompson. Leonardo and Allen (2008) characterize ideology as neither negative or neutral, but rather negating. Within this characterization, the distinction between positive and negative ideology is important to note. "Positive ideology negates structures of domination and relations of exploitation…it accomplishes this move partly by building critique of the social through columns of concepts and then by demystifying the 'pillars' of civilization, like progress, meritocracy, or objectivity" (p.22). Negative ideology refers to hegemonic ideology that perpetuates the subordination of people of color.

At the classroom level, a "teacher's ideological orientation is often reflected in his or her beliefs and attitudes and in the way he or she interacts with, treats, and teaches students in the classroom (Bartolome, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Sleeter, 1994).   In this sense, teacher ideology serves as a "connected set of systematically related beliefs and ideas about what are felt to be essential features of teaching [both cognitive and evaluative]" (Sharp & Green, 1975, p. 68). Ideologies inform teachers' approaches to classroom instruction, their relationships with students, and student learning. While it is well understood that teachers can make a positive impact in the lives of the students with which they work, uncritical teachers who harbor hegemonic ideologies have the potential to "replicate the institutional imperative that 'relegates' minority children to a lifestyle of poverty and servitude"(Gonsalves, 2008, p. 1). As such, an important element of teacher education programs and to schools is addressing the ideological orientations of pre-service teachers. This is also important to the development of in-service

teachers whose teacher preparation may have lacked opportunities for ideological examination and critique.

Ideology has the capacity to promote or suppress certain political interests (Burbules, 1992). The ideologies that individuals hold persist "even when they have retrogressive or repressive effects: because they present plausible and relatively coherent explanations of the social world, because they encourage, reassure, and motivate people; and because they establish a basis for solidarity and a sense of one's own position in the world (Burbules, 1992, p. 7).

Dysconcious and passive racism

Teachers' beliefs, whether conscious or unconscious, permeate their classroom practices and their interactions with students (Marx, 2006). King (1991) applies the term *dysconcious racism* to refer to limited and distorted understandings about inequity and cultural diversity that "make it difficult to act in favor of truly equitable education" (p. 134). These limited and distorted understandings are linked to "internalized ideologies that both justify the racial status quo and devalue cultural diversity" (King, 1991, p. 134). She further defines dynconsciousness as an "uncritical habit of mind (including, perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as a given" and dysconscious racism as an impaired consciousness or "distorted way of thinking about race as compared to, for example, critical consciousness" (p. 135). Closely related to dysconcious racism is the concept of *passive racism*. Marx (2006) refers to passive racism as the most common form of racism in the U.S. today. In contrast, active racism is generally viewed as the extreme form of racism and is considered unacceptable, while passive racism is more widely accepted, remains relatively unchallenged, and "is so ingrained in American institutions,

philosophies, and practices that it is often times completely invisible to the whites who benefit from it" (pp. 10).

To overcome dysconscious or passive racism teachers must engage in the process of unlearning racism. This process requires that teachers engage in problem-posing around the dominant hegemonic ideologies that permeate American schools and influence their practices and interactions with students. In addition teachers must also interrogate and critique their own ideologies and examine any and all influences on their thinking and identities as they consider the teachers they want to become (King, 1991) and work towards transforming their identities. Ideological interrogation and critique serves to dismantle teachers' hegemonic ideologies replacing them with counter-hegemonic ideologies (Bartolome, 2008). Unfortunately, this process is missing in many teacher education programs and in-service teacher professional development that promote a liberal multicultural perspective. A key weakness of liberal multiculturalism is "its inability to tackle seriously and systematically these structural inequalities, such as racism, institutionalized poverty, discrimination, as a result of its continued use of the affirmational and politically muted discourse of culture and cultural recognition" (May & Sleeter, 2010) . As a result of liberal teacher preparation, teachers enter classrooms without experiencing perspective transformation, which is

> the emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-structural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings. (Meizrow, 1981, p. 6)

In direct contrast to liberal multiculturalism, teachers who are prepared from a critical multicultural perspective are aware of the socio-historical construction of whiteness, challenge

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the idea of teaching as apolitical and removed from historical power struggles, (Nylund, 2006) and having gone through the process of unlearning racism are able to "find ways to reposition themselves in a society that makes them critical and race-conscious" (Rodríguez, 2008, p. 300).

To counter dysconscious racism and hegemonic ideology, it is crucial that teachers develop *political* and *ideological clarity,* (Bartolome, 2002, 2008; Bartolome & Balderrama, 2001) which is necessary for teachers to act as change agents equipped with "counter-hegemonic orientations [ideologies] and pedagogical interventions that work to neutralize unequal material conditions and biased beliefs" (Bartolome, 2008, p. x). Political clarity is defined as "the process by which individuals achieve a deepening awareness of the sociopolitical and economic realities that shape their lives and their capacity to transform their lives" and "the process by which individuals come to understand better the possible linkages between macro-level political, economic, and social variables, and subordinated groups' academic performance at the micro-level classroom" (Bartolome & Balderrama, 2001, p. 48). Ideological clarity is defined as "the process by which individuals struggle to identify both the dominant society's explanations for the existing societal socioeconomic and political hierarchy as well as their own explanation of the social order and any resulting inequalities" (pp. 48). Only through the process of ideological interrogation can teachers liberate themselves from the dysconscious/passive racism and the hegemonic ideologies that prevent them from justly serving their students.

Hegemonic ideologies

Hegemonic ideologies create roadblocks to teachers' development of critical consciousness placing teachers in a role of maintaining the status quo and perpetuating the racist policies and practices in our educational system that continue to marginalize and subordinate

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students of color. Hegemonic ideologies such as "integration, assimilation, and color-blindness

have become the official norms of racial enlightenment" (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, p. 14).

> Central to the formation of hegemony is the production of ideology. If hegemony is the
>
> larger effort of the powerful to win the consent of the 'subordinates,' then ideological
>
> hegemony involves the cultural forms, the meanings, the rituals, and the representations
>
> that produce consent to the status quo and individuals' particular places within it.
>
> Ideology vis-à-vis hegemony moves the critical inquirer beyond explanations of
>
> domination that have used terms such as propaganda to describe the way media, political,
>
> educational, and other sociocultural productions coercively manipulate citizens to adopt
>
> oppressive meanings. (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 266)

Meritocracy is one example of a commonly held hegemonic ideology among pre-service and in-

service teachers. The myth of meritocracy is pervasive among educators' interpretations of the

achievement gap. Jary and Jary (1991) refer to meritocracy as a "form of society in which

educational and social success is the outcome of ability and individual merit" (pp. 303).

Educators who believe in meritocracy believe that "the system is there to serve everybody who

wants it (many pre-service teachers subscribe to this ideology, which leads to victim-blaming,

individualism, and even more dangerous, an almost blind acceptance of the system as

equitable)"(Rodríguez, 2008, p. 302). Key to the meritocracy ideology is the belief that people

of color (who are citizens of a free and equal society) are responsible for the own disadvantages

and that those that have excelled within the meritocracy (beneficiaries of the meritocracy) have

worked hard and have taken advantage of the opportunities available to them.

> The talented [beneficiaries of a meritocratic system] for the most part, are members of the
>
> dominant culture whose values comprise the very foundations that inform the knowledge

and skills a student must possess or achieve to be designated as an individual who merits reward…Public schools persistently legitimize this myth of meritocracy to guarantee that successful participation in the educational system becomes the visible process by which individuals are allocated or rewarded with higher social status. Through a system of merit, the process of unequal privilege and entitlement is successfully smoke screened under the guise of democratic schools. (Darder, 1991, pp. 11-12)

The meritocratic ideology "appears deeply rooted in an American ideology of individualism, belief that each individual determines his or her own situation" (Farley, 2000, p. 66) and has "contributed to victim blaming, individualism, and even more dangerous, an almost blind acceptance of the system as equitable" (Rodríguez, 2008, p. 302). Deconstructing the meritocratic ideology requires interrogating and critiquing the role that meritocracy actually plays in the lives of people within the margins of society. This meritocratic ideology is translated by educators as the belief that the "socioeconomic hierarchy is based on merit, and that nonwhite and linguistic minority students who want to achieve simply need to learn English and adopt the mainstream culture (Bartolome, 2008, p. xvi). Within this ideology, the solution to inequity and the achievement gap is as simple as individuals assimilating into the dominant culture, which is viewed as superior.

The assimilationist ideology refers to the "belief that immigrants and subordinated indigenous groups should be taught to conform to the practices of the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture" (Bartolome, 2008, p. xvii). Within this ideology the cultures of people of color are viewed as a deficit. Deficit ideology refers to "the deeply seated beliefs about the inferior academic abilities of minority students" (Abbate-Vaughn, 2004, p. 229). Bartolome (2008) maintains that deficit ideology as a "social pathology model or the cultural deprivation model"

(pp. xviii) has the longest history of any educational perspective or theory. Deficit ideology, widely held by most mainstream teachers (Lipman, 1998) is one of the most common understandings of the achievement gap (Flores, 1993) and one of the most prevalent forms of contemporary racism (Yosso, 2005). Deficit thinking is deeply embedded in individual consciousness of teachers, scholars, and policy-makers (Flores, 2001) and "takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: A) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and B) parents neither value nor support their child's education" (Yosso, 2005, p. 75). Such deficit thinking leads to "racialized assumptions about communities of color that lead schools to default to the 'banking method' of education critiqued by Paulo Freire (1973)" (Yosso, 2005, p. 75).

> The combination of a meritocratic view of the social order combined with an assimilationist ideology and a deficit orientation proves to be an especially deadly one because it rationalizes disrespect for minority students' native languages and primary cultures, misteaching them English and about the dominant culture, and then blaming their academic difficulties on the students themselves. (Bartolome, 2008, p. xix)

Dysconcious or passive racism is manifested in distortions in teacher thinking in relation to race, ethnicity, culture, and inequity that remain invisible and unacknowledged. "The invisible foundation—hegemonic ideologies that inform our perceptions and treatment of subordinated students—needs to be made explicit and studied critically in order to comprehend the challenges presented in minority education—and possible solutions—more accurately" (Bartolome, 2008, p. 18).

Deficit thinking, so pervasive that it might be considered a characteristic of white culture (Marx, 2006), is often perpetuated in teacher education programs. As a result, many white

middle-class teachers approach diversity as a problem or as a deficit to be overcome and in accordance with this view, they tend to hold low expectations for students who are different from themselves (Cochran-Smith, 2004) and the mainstream. Rodriguez (2008) found that many pre-service teachers enter classrooms with deficit-oriented frameworks toward low-income minority groups, particularly Latinas/os and Blacks. Marx (2006) observed an array of deficit thinking among pre-service teachers related to culture, language, family, esteem and intelligence. In addition to low expectations, teachers whose work is guided by deficit frameworks, tend to view the solution to the problem of diversity as assimilation or a melting away of difference. From this perspective, "White is the normative and diversity is equated with depravity, disadvantage, and deficiency" and when diversity is "regarded as a deficit, it has also been historically assumed that the 'inevitable' solution to the problem is assimilation, wherein differences are expected to largely disappear, and a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment is assumed to equate with equity for all" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 144).

Teacher education

According to leRoux and Moller (2002),

> Initial teacher training, as far as multicultural education is concerned, is grossly inadequate or, in many instances, non-existent. In many cases it is regarded as a luxury which cannot be afforded in a time of scarcity of resources, or as a contentious politically sensitive area best avoided. In both initial and in-service training courses where multicultural issues are addressed, the training focus tends to be on multiculturalism rather than on race and educational issues. (p. 185)

In order to effectively counter the education gap, teacher education programs must expand beyond the realm of traditional (technical) approaches to multicultural education and diversity. In essence teacher education needs to be reconceptualized so that diversity, equity, and social justice are dealt with in authentic versus superficial and vicarious ways (Ladson-Billings, 2001) that presents an "over simplistic and naïve view of the wider and social cultural power relations" (Nylund, 2006, p. 28). The predominant approach of teacher education programs is the cultural competence model, which focuses cultural awareness, knowledge acquisition, sill development and inductive learning comes from the central assumption that by teaching about various ethnic and racial groups one would be more sensitive and empathic to the needs of ethnic clients [students] (Nylund, 2006, p. 28). Situated within this liberal frame, "multiculturalism is viewed as a celebration of diversity and recognized the importance of inclusion, participant, emphasizing difference, pluralism and tolerance," (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 40) fostering "color and power evasiveness" (Frankenberg, 1997) and obscuring the role that whiteness plays in diversity and multiculturalism and perceptions of difference. Teachers prepared through the liberal approach do not develop race consciousness and are prone to deficit thinking, whereby the attribute student failure to differences in values, culture, motivation, attitudes, language barriers, social problems and other issues that detract from the centrality of race and racism. Programs structured upon a liberal framework "perpetuate teaching practices that have historically benefitted white middle-class students, thus failing to address the learning needs of those from cultural or ethnic origin other than the mainstream culture" (Le Roux & Moller, 2002, p. 184). Teacher education programs "should include aspects of individual and institutional racism in a racism awareness initiative" (Le Roux & Moller, 2002, p. 185).

Cochran-Smith (2004) proposes the following questions to examine how teacher education programs approach diversity.

- *Diversity question:* asks how diversity should be viewed or understood and what the solutions to the challenge or problem are.

- *Ideology* or *social justice question*: asks about the purpose of schooling, the role of public education in a democratic society, and the role of schooling in maintaining or changing the economic and social structure of society.

- *Knowledge question*: asks what knowledge, interpretive frameworks, beliefs, and attitudes are necessary to teach diverse populations effectively, particularly knowledge and beliefs about culture and its role in schooling.

- *Teacher learning question:* asks how teachers learn to teach diverse populations, and what the particular pedagogies of teacher preparation make this learning possible.

- *Practice question*: asks what competencies and pedagogical skills teachers need to teach diverse populations effectively.

- *Outcomes question*: asks what the outcomes of teacher preparation should be and how and by whom these outcomes should be assessed.

- *Recruitment question:* asks which candidates should be recruited and selected to teach.

- *Coherence question:* circles and encompasses the previous seven questions and asks to what degree the answers to the first seven questions are connected to and coherent with one another and how diversity issues are positioned in relation to other issues.

The responses to these questions by teacher education programs can reveal much about the underlying values and beliefs held towards diversity. In traditional approaches, the responses to

these questions reveal deeply ingrained hegemonic ideologies. For example, in the more

traditional approaches to multiculturalism (e.g. the melting pot), diversity is viewed as a problem

or deficit and the education of minority students are dealt with via a deficit ideological

framework (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Within this

framework, student success depends on their willingness and ability to assimilate into the

dominant culture. Hegemonic ideologies often implicit in teacher education programs are

perpetuated by erroneous and problematic assumptions such as the following:

- American schooling and society are meritocratic

- Racism is a problem of the past that has been solved

- Tracking and high stakes testing are neutral ways of structuring learning and assessing merit

- Purpose of schooling is to assimilate students into the mainstream and the workforce in order to support a global economy (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

To be antiracist and social justice oriented, teacher education must move beyond a technical

focus by first acknowledging and then presenting teaching as a political activity and as such

challenge the above assumptions.

> The goal of teacher education should be to develop pedagogy, curriculum, and a research
>
> agenda that accounts for the role of race and racism in U.S. education and to work toward
>
> elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination in
>
> education. (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 2)

A major outcome that pre-service teachers need to achieve is political consciousness and an

ideological commitment that will provide the foundation for their roles as activists or cultural

workers (Freire, 1998) working to diminish inequities not only in education, but in society. In

this sense, teacher education programs must support teachers' sociopolitical learning leading to a sociopolitical consciousness that empowers teachers to "function as change agents in a society that is deeply divided along racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and class lines" (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 104). Indicators of sociopolitical consciousness include:

- The teacher knows the larger sociopolitical context of the school-community-nation-world.

- The teacher has an investment in the public good.

- The teacher plans and implements academic experiences that connect students to the larger social context.

- The teacher believes that students' success has consequences for his or her own quality of life (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 120.121).

Sociopolitical consciousness (critical consciousness) is an essential outcome of teacher education programs that effectively prepare teachers for diverse high-need/low performing schools. Sociopolitically conscious teachers have not only gone through the process of critiquing and interrogating their own ideologies, but have gained the political and ideological clarity to interrogate systemic policies and practices that perpetuate inequity in education. Unfortunately, sociopolitical consciousness is not evident in the conceptual frameworks of many teacher education programs as

Few teacher education programs and departments have built into their ongoing operations the intellectual and organizational contexts that support teacher educators' learning about (and struggling with) issues of race, racism, diversity, and social justice in education. Part of what this means is that learning to teach for social justice is partly a process of 'unlearning' racism

and other problematic stances that are often buried in teacher education courses and curricula (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 13).

Because of the dynamic and complex nature of teacher preparation, structuring experiences for pre-service teachers to unlearn racism requires that teacher education be read as a racial text (Cochran-Smith, 2004) that "must be read, reread, analyzed, critiqued, revised, and made public" to see "what kind of message or story about race and racism is being told, what assumptions are being made, what identity perspectives and points of views are implicit, and what is valued or devalued" (pp. 88). Although multicultural education in teacher preparation programs is meant to prepare teachers to work successfully with diverse student populations, it may also "reinforce prejudices and stereotypes, rather than disrupt them" (Marx, 2006). Teacher education read as a racial text serves to engage pre-service teachers in the interrogation and critique of many of the hegemonic ideologies that serve to perpetuate racism and inequity in schools. When teacher education is not read as a racial text, teachers remain uncritical and are bound to scripted teaching practices pre-determined by textbook companies and adopted by schools, thereby enacting their role in perpetuating and reproducing the inequities in schooling.

For teachers of historically marginalized students, developing a "permanently critical attitude" is essential to critical consciousness or the ability to "read the word and world" (Freire, 1973). What is needed is antiracist multicultural education that "acknowledges the role of white supremacist hegemonic ideology and its systematic effect on the infrastructure of the educational system" (Martin, 2008, p. 166). While a firm grasp of pedagogy and content knowledge are critical elements of teacher competency and effectiveness, teachers' "conceptions—their mindset, thinking, belief systems, attitudes, and overall understanding of the teaching and learning exchange [also] need to be addressed because these conceptions shape their curricula

and instructional practices with P-12 students" (Milner, 2010, p. 118).

Empirical Studies

In the literature, there is not a clear or consistent distinction made between ideology and beliefs. In fact, the terms are used interchangeably. Empirical studies on teacher ideology are nearly non-existent and many of the studies that purport to be about ideology focus on teacher beliefs. As such, this section will focus on empirical studies of teacher beliefs. In the literature, ideology and belief are often used interchangeably. The following studies were the most closely aligned with the literature on teacher ideology and best inform this study of teacher ideology.

Several studies have focused on the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices, many in the content areas of literacy, math and science. Most of the studies have focused on pre-service teacher beliefs and few have focused on the evolving beliefs of pre-service teachers as they transition from pre-service teaching to in-service teaching, a critical territory of belief research that has yet to be explored.

In studies that examine pre-service teacher beliefs, prior knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning were assessed upon entry to programs as a baseline from which to compare as they progressed throughout their tenure in the programs. Researchers then work to identify specific changes in pre-service teacher beliefs and the factors that triggered these changes. In one such study, Hollingsworth (1989) investigated the changes in pre-service teacher beliefs about reading instruction. She traced pre-program beliefs about teaching and learning among 14 elementary and secondary pre-service teachers, examining patterns of intellectual change from pre-service to in-service, influences and constraints on that change, the role of the cooperating teacher and university supervisor in effecting intellectual change, and the relationship between teacher beliefs and identity maintenance. A comparative process was used to describe changes in

pre-service teacher thinking. Initial interviews with pre-service teachers were designed to capture the teachers' philosophies of education followed by classroom observations designed to clarify interview data. Data analysis revealed the existence of thematic patterns suggesting a dynamic model of learning to teach in which prior beliefs play a critical role (Hollingsworth, 1989).

In a qualitative study conducted by Johnson and Hall (2007), science lessons delivered in a middle school with a high percentage of low-income minority students were examined, specifically looking at how one teacher's beliefs about his students, influenced his instructional practices. Their findings suggest that teachers' beliefs and expectations of their students, which are part of a larger personal belief system, ultimately interact with and may influence science teachers' planning and delivery of instruction, ultimately influencing student achievement.

In another study the inconsistencies between a beginning elementary math teacher's beliefs were examined and a model of relationships between beliefs and practices was proposed to provide a conceptual framework for the examination of factors that influence beliefs practices and the level of inconsistency between them. Researchers in this study used audio-taped interviews, observations, document analysis, and a beliefs survey, and findings indicated that the math teachers' practices were more closely linked with her beliefs about mathematics content than her beliefs about mathematics pedagogy.

Metaphors have been used in studies to develop a better understanding of the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices. Findings from a study conducted by Tobin (1990) suggest that significant changes in classroom practice are possible if teachers are prompted to explore their teaching roles in terms of new metaphors. Tobin (1990) explored beliefs through the use of metaphors and approached change in beliefs through the exploration, analysis and reformulation

of metaphors. In this case metaphors were used as a way to tap into teacher knowledge and belief systems. Because metaphors are the basis of concepts, they can be used to deconstruct teachers' beliefs about their roles and can be the focus of reflection and change as teachers engage in the re-conceptualizing of their roles and related beliefs (Tobin, 1990). Farrell (2006) used metaphor analysis to make prior knowledge and beliefs explicit during the pre-service teaching experience. In this study, Farrell (2006) found that a close examination of the metaphors pre-service teachers have for teaching and learning not only provides the pre-service teachers with insight into their own beliefs, but also stimulates a necessary awareness critical to the initiation of change when current metaphors conflict with the new content with which they are presented. His findings suggest that presenting pre-service teachers with the opportunity to reveal their own metaphors for teaching and learning may help them become more critically reflective teachers. In addition, Farrell (2006) concludes that when teachers are "encouraged to articulate their beliefs about teaching and learning by the use of metaphor, they can become more aware of the origin of these beliefs and can then decide whether these metaphors remain valid and useful for their particular context" (p. 247).

Other researchers have approached the study of teacher beliefs through the use of case studies. Johnston (1994) used case studies to examine elementary teachers and found that the teachers' backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, and personalities all influenced what they took from their teacher preparation programs. This study also made use of metaphors constructed by the participants to better understand the relationship between beliefs and practices. Wong (2005) also used a qualitative multiple-case study approach to explore the beliefs of music teachers and her study revealed that although teachers held similar beliefs about music education, their instructional practices differed; they adopted different pedagogical approaches in actual

classroom practice because of different social and cultural backgrounds.

Berry (2006) applied a comprehensive framework for the exploration of teacher beliefs that includes (a) exploring a method of identifying beliefs by their defining characteristics (i.e., existential presumption, alternativity, affect, and episodic storage); (b) providing a strong example of how teachers' beliefs may form coherent packages or constellations that lead to instructional choices (e.g., how to teach process writing); and (c) for the specific case of teaching writing, uncovering how teachers nuance a specific instructional strategy-process writing-to conform to their underlying beliefs.

Observing and measuring beliefs is a difficult and complex process. The challenge in the study of teacher beliefs is in large part due to the difficulty in defining, conceptualizing and making sense of the varying understandings of beliefs, belief structures, and belief systems. "As a global construct, belief does not lend itself easily to empirical investigation" (Pajares, 1992). However, beliefs will prove to be the most valuable psychological construct to teacher education (Pintrich, 1990). The difficulty of observing and measuring beliefs creates a great challenge for teacher educators and school administrators who seek effective ways to train and develop teachers. A more in depth understanding of the nature of teachers' beliefs and how these inform their practices is needed and as such effective methods of examining teacher thinking and their complex belief systems must be identified. Also important in beliefs research is the identification of consistencies and inconsistencies among beliefs within the larger belief systems.

Irez (2006) recommends a reflection-oriented qualitative approach to beliefs research. He promotes the use of teacher reflection as a means for assessing individuals' beliefs and as a window into their thought processes and belief systems. Irez (2006) asserts that assessing beliefs "should include means and opportunities to promote reflection in order to achieve a complete

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understanding of an individual's beliefs" (p. 18). The process of reflection serves to uncover

teacher beliefs and aids teachers in identifying the habitual factors that unconsciously influence

their behaviors and the influence these behaviors then have on student learning. Of reflective

thought, Dewey (1933) writes, "Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or

supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions to

which it tends constitutes reflective thought" (p.3).

While it is difficult to locate empirical studies on teacher ideology specifically, I did locate a

single case study drawing from grounded theory and critical ethnography and focusing on

teacher professional communities (TPCs) as part of larger school reform efforts. Using a

grounded theory and critical ethnography approach, the study explored challenges to the

effectiveness of TPCs in effecting change given the diverse teacher ideologies that collide among

groups of teachers within a TPC. Through this study, researchers sought to find out how

teachers in a given TPC construe the nature of their work with urban students and what belief

systems come into play in a given TPC and how they affect reform goals. The study yielded an

"in-depth description of teacher belief systems within one TPC and the potential implications of

these for further research into small urban professional communities" (Abbate-Vaughn, 2004, p.

228). A major finding of this study was that teacher interaction through TPC's alone may not

significantly alter teacher practices, partially because of the variety of assumptions and

interpretations that teachers bring to such forums.

Lacking in the previously discussed studies is a critical focus where the essential problem of

the study is social relations of domination. While the essential goal of examining teacher beliefs

or ideology should be to expose, challenge, and deconstruct negative ideology in ways that

counter domination and oppression, these studies take a politically neutral stance and as such

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only scratch the surface of research on teacher ideology. Critical studies "give attention to how the marginalization of people is constructed, various forms in which power operates" (McLaren & Giarelli, 1995, p. xii). A study of teacher ideology should go beyond mere exploration and identification of beliefs to achieve a critical critique of beliefs that uncovers habits or ways of acting and thinking that perpetuate racism with the end result being the evolution of new ways of acting and thinking that counter racism.

In this section, I have addressed the literature that informs this study. The topics addressed create the structural and theoretical backdrop necessary for a critical examination of teacher ideology. As a researcher, my aim is not only to unveil the ideologies that undergird the thinking of teachers but to critically examine how these teachers perceive and construct meaning and understanding of the phenomena of race, ethnicity, racism and whiteness. Further, I want to identify to what aspects of their preparation experience they attribute their perceptions, meanings and understandings of these phenomena. In the next section, I present the methodology, research design, and methods that will allow me, as the researcher to not only reveal deep seated beliefs that contribute to larger ideology, but to interrogate and critique these in an effort to begin to identify ways in which teacher education programs can develop in pre-service teachers, the counter-hegemonic ideologies necessary to close the education gap.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

A primary objective of this study was to uncover any hegemonic ideologies held by the participants. To accomplish this, it was necessary to establish a contextual understanding of the participants' perceptions about diversity and the achievement gap. Thus, I applied a critical qualitative methodological framework (Leonardo & Allen, 2008) using an interpretive paradigm (Merriam, 1998). This section describes the methodology that guides this study as well as the research design and methods. I begin with a discussion of the terms methodology, ontology, epistemology, and research methods. Because this was a study of teacher ideology, it was also important to include a discussion on the theory of ideology that guides this study. I believe it is important to clearly define ideology as a good faith effort to eliminate any ambiguity about the phenomenon of ideology as it relates to this study.

Research Questions

The participants in this study are candidates in an alternative licensure program that focuses on the core values of diversity, multicultural perspectives and social justice. The participants have formed perceptions about diversity, diverse students and their roles as teachers in diverse and high-need/low-performing schools based on their experiences within the program and their student teaching. The following research questions were constructed to examine the participants perceptions about diversity and the achievement gap and ultimately to bring to the surface the underlying ideologies that influence their thinking and practices.

Overriding Question: What ideologies undergird the thinking of alternatively licensed teachers who work with diverse students in high-need/low-performing schools in New Mexico?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the perceptions that alternatively licensed teachers have about the diverse students they teach in high-need/low-performing schools in New Mexico?

2. How do alternatively licensed teachers perceive their preparedness for teaching diverse students in high-need/low-performing schools?

3. How do alternatively licensed teachers construct meaning and understanding of the phenomena of race, ethnicity, racism and whiteness and to what aspects of their preparation experience do they attribute these perceptions, meanings, and understandings?

Methodology

It is important to distinguish between the terms methodology and method. While methodology is defined as the "overarching theoretical approach guiding research" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 38), methods are the actual data collection techniques applied by researchers. The methods of course are informed by the ontological and epistemological aspects of the theoretical framework. Ontology "involves asking what you see as the very nature and essence of things in the social world" (Mason, 2002, p. 14). Essentially, ontology is a view of the social world or the researcher's perspective and stance that informs the research strategy and defines the phenomenon being studied in terms of what it looks like, how it can be observed, and how it can be measured. Epistemology refers to the researcher's "theory of knowledge, and should

therefore concern the principles and rules by which you (the researcher) decide(s) whether and how social phenomenon can be known, and how knowledge can be demonstrated" (Mason, 2002, p. 16). Epistemologies inform the selection of methodologies and are reflective of the researcher's ideological stance.

Ontologically, I view the world through a critical race theoretical lens. Critical race theory begins with the notion that racism is intricately sewn into the fabric of American society" and that it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture" (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011, p. 1334). This study challenges "historical amnesia" (McLaren & Giarelli, 1995, p. xii) of racism, thereby targeting the power relations and structural inequities in society as *the* problem of the research. It is important to distinguish the difference between critical theory and critical race theory. While critical theory scholars tend focus more on class, critical race theory brings in a racial focus, which I believe is important to my research.

Epistemologically, I follow a post-positivist view of knowledge in that I believe that knowledge is relational and not absolute. Of post-positivism, Burbules and Phillips (2000) state, "[h]uman knowledge is not based on unchallengeable, rock-solid foundations—it is conjectural" (p. 26). I also view research as a problem of meaning and "how meaning is represented in research and the political consequences around the terms of the debate are central concerns for critical qualitative research at the intersection of ideology and meaning" (Leonardo & Allen, 2008).

Methodologically, I followed the phenomenological tradition, as focusing on the lived experiences of the research participants' understanding of a concept or phenomenon (the

participants' experiences as student teachers of diverse students in high-need/low-performing schools). "The key characteristic of phenomenology is the study of the way in which members of a group or community themselves interpret the world and life around them…the focus is on how individuals create and understand their own life spaces" (Mertens, 2005, p. 240). A critical qualitative phenomenological study best positioned me to address the research questions I posed which center on ideology as a response to social relations of domination, thus comprising the problem of ideology (Leonardo, 2003b). Ideology is best tapped through methods that examine the participants' lived experiences and stimulate self-reflection, critique, and critical discourse among the participants.

Theoretically, I draw from a post-structural theory of ideology, which asserts the following:

- Ideology is a system of interests that creates dispositions and is organized into agendas;

- Ideology is a response to social relations of domination, thus comprising the problem of ideology;

- Ideology may promote or negate domination;

- Ideology is made intelligible through discourse and challenged through ideology critique (Leonardo, 2003b).

A post-structural theory of ideology acknowledges the organization of ideology into structures and agents. Ideology (capital 'I') is the structural backdrop of personal/individual ideologies (lower case 'i'). If it is indeed through their ideologies that humans either promote or negate domination, it is important to unveil ideology through discourse and to critique it in an effort to

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reshape not only individual ideologies, but also collective ideology in a way that negates domination.

Teachers, as agents of schools/education, also play a role in promoting or negating domination, depending on the ideologies that undergird their beliefs about their students and their daily practices. As such, it is critical that teacher ideologies are examined as they are revealed through discourse and that teachers not only reflect on their ideologies, but also that their ideologies are exposed to critique. To gain a better understanding of ideology and how it is perpetuated and/or challenged, I applied ideology critique as an analytical research tool. Through a post-structural theoretical lens, *ideology critique* serves as an analytical tool that can be used to "shed light on the persistent problems of inequality" (Leonardo, 2003b, p. 203), as it leads to an understanding of how people discursively negotiate dominant meanings (Giroux, 1988; Leonardo, 2003b).

Research Design

This was a five-month critical qualitative study with document analysis, in-depth and individual interviews, and focus groups. I chose to use a qualitative approach as a "legitimate mode of social and human science exploration" (Creswell, 1998 p. 9) that offers descriptive data that cannot be captured through a quantitative research design.   I believe a critical qualitative research design was the best way to address the complex and challenging research questions of this study, which target the ideologies that undergird teachers' thinking. Ideology is best examined "in a natural setting where the researcher is an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyzes them inductively, focuses on the meaning of the participants,

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and describes the process that is expressive and persuasive in language" (Creswell, 1998 p. 14). A critical qualitative approach allowed for the voices and, in turn the ideologies of the participants as they were revealed through their writings and discourse.

It was my hope that in examining the participants' ideologies, I would also gain insights about the program that prepared them. As a researcher applying critical qualitative research methods, I was better positioned to learn more about how the participants have constructed meanings and understandings about race, ethnicity, racism and whiteness through their shared experiences teaching in diverse and complex social contexts. Also important to the design of this study was that as the researcher I wanted to gain more insight into how whiteness is revealed and reproduced through discourse. As such, I applied critical discourse analysis as a methodological tool, which, will help me develop a better understanding of how social structures of power are reproduced through discourse (Fairclough, 2001).

Methods

Participant Sample

For purposes of this study, I used purposive sampling to identify 15 pre-service teachers completing the student teaching phase of an alternative teacher licensure program in New Mexico. All the participants have bachelor's degrees or higher in the content areas in which they were seeking teaching endorsements and were teaching in diverse and high-need/low-performing schools in New Mexico.

I selected this specific community college alternative teacher licensure program because it struggles with recruiting diverse faculty and pre-service teacher candidates. The program is a

classic example of the racial/cultural mismatch discussed in Chapter 2. Sixty-five percent of the faculty are white and 81% are female. Sixty-five percent of the candidates in the alternative licensure program are white and 70% are female. The program prepares about 150 teachers per year, and most of these graduates end up teaching in diverse and low-performing/high-need schools in New Mexico. In this participant sample, nine out of fifteen (60%) of the participants were white and six (40%) were non-white (three Hispanic, one Native American, one African American and one Asian).

Another reason I chose this particular program is that the conceptual framework of the program identifies core values that include diversity, multicultural perspectives and critical reflection, and a curricular focus on social justice. Candidates are expected to engage in critical reflection throughout the program of study and focus is placed on preparing candidates to effectively teach diverse students in complex social contexts. The program employs three full-time faculty and most of the courses are taught by part-time faculty. Most of the program candidates hold internship licenses and were employed full-time as teachers in New Mexico schools. As such, they learn about diversity through the program, as well as through first-hand experiences teaching in diverse and high-need/low-performing schools.

Setting

This study took place in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I chose this location because New Mexico can be categorized as a high-need state due to the large number of high-need schools. In 2009, approximately 68% of the schools in New Mexico did not meet adequate yearly progress (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2009). New Mexico schools face many challenges including: recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers, poverty (high

percentages of students on free or reduced lunch), and high drop-out rates. I chose the city of Albuquerque to conduct my research because this is the location of the alternative teacher licensure program I chose as the focus of my research. The participants were enrolled in a community college alternative licensure program and were completing their student teaching in New Mexico public schools. I chose the participants given the criterion mentioned previously, which includes the criteria of teaching in diverse and high-need schools. To recruit the participants, I made a presentation in the supervised field experience seminar courses. This presentation provided an overview of the study as well as the participant criteria. I asked those participants who met the criteria to send me an e-mail requesting to participate (if they were interested). I also left a flier with the information with the participants and encouraged them to send any questions to me via e-mail. Reminders were also sent out by the program director via e-mail to the participants a week after the presentations were made.

Although New Mexico can be categorized as a high-need state in terms of its schools, it is also the home of innovation related to teacher quality, teacher recruitment, and teacher preparation. New Mexico passed legislation in 1996 that allowed for alternative teacher licensure routes. Between 2007 and 2012, a total of 8,682 level-one teaching licenses were issued (A. Moll, personal communication, November 26, 2012). Of those licenses issued, 1,080 (12%) were issued through an alternative licensure pathway (A. Moll, personal communication, November 26, 2012).

The specific program I chose to study is a classic example of the cultural and racial mismatch I discuss in Chapter 2. As a former teacher education director, I have worked with the

director of the program and have had opportunities to engage in dialogue with her and program faculty about the program, its evolution, mission, vision, and goals. In these conversations, the program director has voiced concerns over the challenges of recruiting diverse faculty and candidates so that the program can better prepare teachers for the diverse students they will inevitably be teaching. Realizing that the racial mismatch exists, the program director and faculty express a commitment to preparing their teachers with cultural competence and critical reflection, that they believe will empower these teachers to be effective in their work with diverse students.

Gaining Entry

I requested permission from the director to conduct my research with candidates of the alternative licensure program. To schedule the focus groups and individual interviews, I worked through the director of the program. As mentioned in the previous section, I made a presentation in the supervised field experience seminar courses providing an overview of the study, identifying the criteria for participation, and responding to any questions from the potential participants. The participants were then free to contact me if they were interested in participating in the study. I did not experience any issues that prevented my access to the program, and I followed the IRB process required by the university as well as the process required by the college of the program of study. The IRB for this study was approved prior to my commencing the study.

Data Collection

This section describes data collection activities for this study. Following a phenomenological framework (Creswell, 1998), I selected multiple participants (15) who were

experiencing a common phenomenon. All of the participants were candidates in an alternative teacher licensure program and were completing the last phase of the program of study (supervised field experience). Information collected consisted of entry- and exit-level diversity statements, individual interviews and focus groups. The entry-level diversity statement was required of the participants upon application to the program. Additionally, the participants were required to complete an exit-level reflection on the core values of the program. My analysis of the exit-level reflections focused on the core values of diversity, multicultural perspectives and critically reflective practice. I conducted individual, in-depth, and semi-structured interviews with each of the 15 participants as well as three separate focus groups (five participants per focus group). The interviews and focus groups were audio-taped and transcribed. I stored the transcripts electronically on an external hard drive and kept it locked in a file cabinet. Once I completed the transcription process, I deleted the audio files from the audio recorder. Upon completion of the analysis, I destroyed any hard copies of the transcripts as well as the electronic files. I used pseudonyms for the participants throughout the analysis to ensure complete confidentiality.

After identifying the participants, I sent each of them a memo introducing the study and asking them to fill out and sign the release form if they agreed to participate in the study. The memo also included a timeline for the study as well as a request for their diversity statements and their end of program core values reflections. They were asked to submit, either electronically or hard copy, their diversity statement, core values reflection, and signed release form, prior to their participation in the study. I used pseudonyms for the participants, their schools, and any other

identifying names or labels to maintain the anonymity of the participants, the schools and students they serve, and alternative licensure faculty and staff. I also had all of the participants sign consent forms prior to conducting document reviews, individual interviews, and the focus group.

In phase one of this study, I collected the written diversity statements of the candidates and conducted textual analyses of them to identify ideological themes and categories. These written statements were a program-entry/application requirement. In phase two, I conducted an individual and in-depth interview with each of the 15 participants in a face-to-face setting mutually agreed upon by each interviewee and myself. The interviews were semi-structured with pre-determined questions. During the semi-structured interviews, I remained open to any additional questions that emerged in my interactions with the participants. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for later review and analysis.

In phase three of the study, I conducted three focus groups, each with five of the participants. The focus groups took place on a mutually agreed upon location off campus and were audio taped and transcribed for analysis. The focus group questions were designed to generate rich discourse around the topic of the achievement gap, ultimately targeting the research questions for this study.

As a central theme in discourse on educational reform, I chose the achievement gap because of its potential to draw out the participants' ideologies. The achievement gap as a topic, prompted the participants to rationalize their positions on why students of color do not perform at the same levels of white students in school. I believed the group dynamics would reveal more

about their individual and collective ideologies as well as the ideology of the program. As the

participants' rationalizations were drawn out in the focus groups, it was my hope that the

participants would naturally experience cognitive dissonance, as their positions would be

challenged through their encounters with others with differing perceptions and understandings of

the achievement gap. However, as I will describe in the analysis, as the group dynamics played

themselves out within the focus groups, I observed *Whiteness-At-Work* (Yoon, 2012) as a

discursive strategy that detracts from the centrality of racism and whiteness, whereby, rather than

challenging and critiquing each other's rationalizations, the participants reinforced each other's

thinking and the larger ideology of whiteness.

Data Analysis

This section describes how I analyzed the data for this study. Data analysis was

conducted sequentially at each of the following phases of data collection: 1) participant writings

(entry-level statements and exit-level core values reflections focusing on diversity), 2) individual

in-depth interviews, and 3) focus groups. In level one of the analysis, I conducted a textual

analysis of the participants' written statements and critiqued them for ideological underpinnings.

It was at this stage, that I identified some preliminary themes. Level two of the analysis was the

stage at which I transcribed the interview and focus group transcripts. During this stage I kept a

journal of my initial thoughts (themes that emerged, observations, contradictions). The

preliminary themes evolved and became more defined.

Upon completion of the transcription process, I began level three of the analysis, which

consisted of reading and rereading the interview and focus group transcripts and the participants'

written statements. As I read through these documents, I further highlighted themes that emerged and aligned them with the initial themes from the journaling process creating subcategories. This stage of the analysis is best described as a refining of the themes taking into account the participants' written statements and interview/focus group transcripts.

At level four of the analysis, I focused on one candidate at a time, comparing their written statements, interview transcripts and focus group transcripts. Through this process, a new set of themes evolved. I collapsed the second level of themes with the refined set of themes that evolved from the triangulation of data. Themes at this stage evolved around the participants' identities (background, educational experiences, experiences with diverse populations, racial identity) beliefs and values (diversity, other, world view, positionality, school environment), preparation (preparedness for teaching diverse students, outcomes, stance, program structure), and ideology (diversity, educational system, schools, and the achievement gap). These themes guided further analysis.

At level five of the analysis, I extracted excerpts that aligned with the level four themes. I then further reviewed and analyzed the transcripts looking for how the participants either promoted or negated racism and whiteness, power relationships, how their discourse was used to justify inequality or make it appear as common sense, and for whiteness ideology). This analysis led to further refinement of the level four themes using participant data to support. The refined themes (level five) were: 1) definitions of diversity, 2) positionality, 3) critical reflection, 4) deficit ideology). I further analyzed and interpreted the participants' statements using these themes as the contexts. Through this process, it became evident to me that the participants used

discursive structures to downplay the centrality of race and even avoid the topic of race altogether. This was evident in the transcripts and their written statements. I conducted further research and was able to put a name to these discursive structures--Whiteness-At-Work. Whiteness-at-Work emerged not only in the language they used, topical shifts they made, and points of emphasis, but also in what they left out within their discourse (i.e., omitting any reference to race in their definitions and reflections about diversity and multiculturalism). Thus, Whiteness-at-Work emerged as an additional theme.

Finally, I organized these themes (vertically) and horizontally, I listed the participants. I added excerpts from the participants' interview transcripts, focus group transcripts and written statements that related to these themes. I created a visual graphic to capture what I identified as the findings and this prompted me to analyze and reflect further. I then returned to the artifacts to triangulate the data by theme and participant to formulate my findings.

At all levels of the analysis, I applied critical hermeneutics, which involves "an in-depth interpretation of structures of meaning as they relate to the problem of domination" (Leonardo, 2003b, p. 205). I also applied critical discourse analysis as a means to expose the ideologies that undergird the participants' talk and text and serve to sustain power relations and inequity (Potter, 2008). I approached the analysis from the view point that power relations are discursive, meaning, they are reinforced and reproduced through discourse, and that discourse carries out ideological work. As such, critical discourse analysis is an interpretive and explanatory process that focuses on discourse as a form of social action (Fairclough & Wodack, 1997, pp. 271-280). In defining critical discourse analysis, Van Dijk (2003) states,

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Critical discourse analysis is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take an explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. (p. 352)

In my analysis of data, I looked for hidden meanings and "myths or unquestioned assumptions that have been long held as self-evident" (Leonardo, 2003c, p. 348) and for themes and categories as they were revealed at all three phases of data collection. I applied ideology critique as an analytical tool to begin to deconstruct the participants' "ideological assumptions about themselves and their world," (Leonardo, 2003b, p. 212). The goal of ideology critique is emancipation from structures of domination that ideology perpetuates and the demystification of the participants' involvement in domination. I anticipated that individualism, meritocracy, and deficit ideology would be revealed at each phase of data collection.

Trustworthiness

I used multiple data collection techniques including: document (textual) analysis, individual interviews, and focus groups. I triangulated the data collected from the application of these techniques. Of triangulation, Mertens (2005) writes,

Triangulation involves checking information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data. For example, multiple methods such as interviews, observation, and document review can be used, and information can be sought from multiple sources using the same method. (p. 255)

"At the heart of educational research is a hermeneutical structure where interpretations collide or complement one another" (Leonardo, 2003c, p. 329). Working with the same participants in multiple formats, I was able to identify both consistencies and contradictions in the participants' responses and use the analysis to problematize and critique their responses. Often times, what an individual thinks and believes is different from what the individual says and does. Thus, the role of researcher includes interpretation of the meaning behind text and discourse. "Interpretation fills the gap between what a speaker meant in saying something and what her statements mean outside of her intentions" (Leonardo, 2003c, p. 331). It applied data triangulation to penetrate beyond the participants' meanings that were intentionally revealed through their discourse to reveal their hidden meanings and ideologies (i.e., unintentional). The contradictions between their intended and unintended communicated meanings were central to the application of ideology critique in this study. Of triangulation of data, I realize that:

> Triangulation should not be used to gloss over legitimate differences in interpretations of data. Such diversity should be preserved in the report so that the 'voices' of the least empowered are not lost. (Mertens, 2005, p. 426)

The interviews and focus groups were transcribed to ensure accuracy in analysis and data reporting. In addition, I sent copies of the information I would be reporting to the participants for their review to determine whether they agree that I accurately represented what they said and think. However, as the researcher applying ideology critique, my interpretation of their communication is also important, and it is essential that I not only represent what appears to be the participants intended meanings, but any hidden meanings that I identified as well.

I stored the data I collected and analyzed in my personal external drive. Any hard copies of data were securely stored at my home. I provided my dissertation chair with copies of all documents (i.e., interview and focus group transcripts, questionnaire submissions, and philosophy statements.)

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I considered myself an outsider, as I was not involved in the alternative licensure program. However, as a longtime proponent of alternative teacher certification I was aware that I hold biases about alternative licensure candidates. For example, I believed that alternative licensure candidates are more mature and experienced in the content area and are thus more likely to be better teachers. Also, I believed that because alternative licensure candidates are more mature, their beliefs are more solidified and as such more difficult to change. Overall, I was aware that it is my bias that alternative licensure candidates can be better teachers than traditional candidates due to their maturity, content area experience and expertise, and experience outside of the field of education. However, I also believe that candidates for alternative certification need to be carefully screened and selected to determine whether they hold beliefs and values that support successful and effective teaching because in many respects, their beliefs are already solidified and will be difficult to change. It is this belief that spurs my research on teacher ideology.

As a researcher following a qualitative inquiry approach, I viewed myself as the instrument for collecting data and that the values, beliefs, and biases I bring to this study are important. Following a critical hermeneutics approach, I believe that my past experiences and

background enhanced the study and as such it was important for me to document my background

in terms of my race, gender, education, and experiential background.

Chapter 4 Participant Profiles

The participants in this study come from a wide array of academic and professional backgrounds, and most of them have limited experiences with diverse populations. With the exception of four, all of the participants were raised in homogenous white, middle to upper class neighborhoods and attended schools that mirrored their communities. Seven of the participants are white, middle-class, females that fit the profile of the racial/cultural mismatch described in the literature review. All but three of the participants come from privileged backgrounds and five of the participants report having very positive experiences as learners in schools and a sense that their teachers genuinely cared about their academic success and well-being. Six of the participants had experiences of being in the minority and marginalized in schools. As wide and varied as their backgrounds are the participants' reasons for choosing to pursue teaching as a profession, and only three of the participants cited the desire to make a difference.

This chapter will provide a profile for each of the participants as they presented themselves in the individual interviews, focus groups, and in their written statements about diversity and multiculturalism. Through the interviews, focus groups, and written statements, the participants revealed their perceptions about diversity, their own preparedness to teach in diverse and high-need, low-performing schools, the meaning of effective teaching of diverse students, and their initial thoughts and perspectives about the achievement gap. The goal of this section is to paint a portrait of the participants individually from their perspectives and in relation to how they perceive themselves as teachers of diverse students, their students and their students' families and communities, and their school environments.

Adrian

Adrian is an African American male in his early forties raised in a single parent household in south central Los Angeles. During his interview, Adrian recalled his struggles and challenges growing up in the "hood" and how one particular teacher made a difference in his life and steered him in a positive direction. He was bullied and believes this experience spurred the troubles he got into as a youth. When reflecting on the reasons he decided to become a teacher, Adrian talks about a teacher who made a difference in his life and whom he says "steered him in a more positive direction." This particular teacher took him and some other adolescent boys to visit a jail outside of Los Angeles and taught them about making good choices. Since he had already been kicked out of a school district, this teacher helped him get enrolled in a new district and provided him with support and mentorship over the remaining years of his adolescence. He says that his experience with this teacher had a very positive impact on his life and greatly influenced his decision to pursue teaching as a profession. At the time of the interview, Adrian was teaching at an elementary school as a reading specialist.

In his interview, Adrian reflected on some of the significant experiences he had as a minority in schools. As a public school student in south central Los Angeles, he was one of a very small group of gifted students who had to be bussed to another school that offered a gifted education program. As the only Black student in the gifted program he expressed the sense that teachers shortchanged him through lowered expectations.

When discussing his *nationality* (his word) and tries to respect, understand and teach any student who walks into his classroom. In his written statements, Adrian expressed being "truly

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in the minority as an African American teacher" in a school where the majority of teachers were white, middle class, and female. When asked how his experience as a learner in schools and his experiences with teachers have influenced his view of and approach to teaching, Adrian identified teachers in his life whose high expectations and no-nonsense approaches he emulates.

In his written statement, Adrian refers to multicultural education as a transformational process that "must be a process through which all aspects of education are examined, critiqued, and rebuilt on ideals of equity and social justice." He communicates his belief that multicultural education is "an important process for improving education" and that "transformation is needed in pedagogy, assessment, and other aspects of schools and schooling." He views multicultural education as a perspective rather than a curriculum and believes that teachers need to consider children's cultural identities and be aware of their own biases.

Also in his written statement Adrian expresses his belief that teachers are influenced by their biases. He states,

> It is tempting to deny our prejudices and claim we find all children equally appealing. Teachers and parents need to acknowledge the fact that we, like our children, are inevitably influenced by the stereotypes and one-sided view of society that exists in our schools and the media. Not only must we recognize those biases, but we must change the attitude they represent by accepting all children as we receive them.

In terms of strategies he uses as a teacher of diverse students, Adrian indicates that he strives to integrate multicultural perspectives within the curriculum and that he intends to foster a climate of understanding, which he believes "encourages appreciation and understanding of other

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cultures as well as one's own and promotes the student's sense of the uniqueness of his/her own culture as a positive characteristic and enables the student to accept the uniqueness of the cultures of others." He believes that the attitudes of his students toward their race and ethnic group and other cultural groups began to form while they were in kindergarten and that they are easily influenced by the culture, opinions, and attitudes of their caregivers, parents and teachers. He believes it is important for teachers to question how their ethnicity, race, or gender affects their interactions with students and whether the impact is negative or positive.

Amy

Amy is a white female in her mid-fifties from a privileged background. She has over 20 years of experience as a substitute teacher in schools. When asked why she chose teaching as a profession, Amy expresses a great love for education and refers to school as her "natural habitat." She also spoke about her wide span of interests and how she felt the need to synthesize all of these interest areas into a career through which she could make a living. She calls her decision to pursue teaching a "mid-life career change kind of thing." Amy talks about being a bum when she was a young adult and having numerous adventures, which were funded by her well off relatives. When she found herself no longer having this financial safety net, she was forced into what she refers to as a "real" career through which she could make a living. Her one criterion for choosing a career was that it had to be fun, which is why she says she chose teaching.

As a learner in schools, Amy recalls that she was always in trouble and not a very good student academically. She refers to herself as the "nerd who always got picked on in school."

She remembers school staff pushing to place her in special education, which her parents did not allow. She also believes that she has some kind of learning disability with math or math-type thinking. In high school she attended what she refers to as a "lax alternative school" where she didn't have to go to class. Over the summer, she finished out in a high school that she describes as a "little more disciplined." After graduating from high school, Amy attended a community college in Maryland where she earned high grades and became an honor student. After completing her undergraduate degree in English and Spanish Literature, she went on to earn a master's degree in English. Post- graduate school, she says she tried to make a living through her artwork and substitute teaching and then decided to pursue an actual teaching license through an alternative licensure route.

When asked how her experience as a learner has shaped her as a teacher, Amy says that she can relate to kids who are really bright but don't achieve well. When describing her philosophy of teaching, Amy lists teacher enthusiasm as important as well as being able to relate things to kids' lives as much as possible. She speaks of her desire to include New Mexico authors in the literature curriculum so that students can relate what they are reading to their personal lives. She also believes that teachers have to keep learning themselves and become lifelong learners.

In her writings about diversity and multiculturalism, Amy states that diversity "is about the world we live in" and "people have not only different races and cultures, but many religions, no religion, every difference and disability, and every learning style." She writes of the importance of respecting diversity, which to her means "seeing people as individuals, each

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having their own way of learning." Amy believes that as "individuals, we also come from backgrounds and cultures which give us solace and influence our attitudes and learning styles. This should be cause for exploration and celebration. In the classroom, children can learn about each other's cultures by sharing foods, languages and stories."

As a classroom teacher she says she would like to foster a team spirit with respect for individual differences. She believes it important to observe her students while they are working to make sure they are learning. Amy believes that teachers need to show support to students who are different and who are marginalized and bullied by promoting a "cruelty-free classroom." As far as instructional strategies, Amy believes that ESL students do better in groups where they can work together. She also believes that children should be exposed to new languages. Amy defines multiculturalism as "an attitude of acceptance of differences and celebration of them."

Having completed her supervised field experience in one of Albuquerque's most ethnically diverse schools, she writes that she learned a lot about different cultures from the students and that this also spurred her "digging a bit more into the gaps of her own background." In reflecting on her own experience as a learner, Amy recalls that history books were "pretty one-sided about Native American affairs and downplayed the horrors of slavery." She believes that in schools today there are "lots of multicultural texts." Through her experience as a substitute teacher, Amy learned "that you don't expect Native students to look you in the eye, and don't put them on the spot."

Barbara

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Barbara is a female in her late thirties, from an upper middle class background. She was raised Catholic and describes the upstate New York community in which she grew up as "homogenous, rural, and suburban." As a first generation college graduate Barbara says that growing up, it was just understood that she would go to college. She teaches literacy to second and third grade English language learners (ELLs) in a teaching English as a second language (TESOL) classroom. Her previous profession is social work, which she believes provided her with foundational knowledge, experiences, and context for her work as a teacher in a diverse and high-need school. It was through this experience that she was exposed to diverse populations.

When asked why she chose to pursue teaching as a profession Barbara says that she wanted to be a teacher since she was in the fifth grade. Also influencing her decision to become a teacher is her love for learning and her love for kids. In her diversity statement (a program entry required document), Barbara states that she recognizes academic skills as truly fundamental life skills and a good education as the foundation for a better life. She sees the possibilities in schools for being the "great leveler in society" and expresses her desire to be part of that.

As a learner in schools, Barbara recalls having very good experiences in secondary and post-secondary schools. She recalls school being fun, dynamic, and interesting and not lecture-based. When speaking about the positive impact of her teachers she says, "They gave themselves to me, not just as a teacher but as a person." As a social worker she experienced students who she says, "Just didn't like school and weren't listened to." She expresses her desire to change this in her role as a teacher.

Barbara refers to education as the "vessel of the American dream and no less." She views her classroom as a place where students get opportunities and expresses her desire to "bring everything enriching that she can into the classroom." Barbara believes that students must put forth effort and that as a teacher she must uphold an "atmosphere of excellence." She refers to education as the true meritocracy and sees it as her role to make school relevant, fun, and to partner with parents.

The opening statement of Barbara's diversity statement is, "To get a good education you have to want it." In her interview she stated her belief that for most young children there is a natural joy in learning and mastery, and that this is reason enough for most students to learn. However, she says that for some students who experience barriers to learning or that their upbringing has not made it clear why it is important to go to school and succeed, her role is to make learning fun. She believes that children get their attitudes about school, their own abilities, and their future prospects from their parents and guardians. She states her interest in working with those children that come from families who have difficulty providing an environment that supports academic achievement.

Barbara defines failing schools as those that benefit only those students who are already privileged, "those whose comfortable, enriched lives are the reason for being educated." She believes that all families want their children to succeed, but that many do not have the experience or tools to turn this intention into reality. She refers to the need to bridge the gap between a family's hopes for their children and their acquisition of the skills, habits, and attitudes necessary for success in school.

Barbara believes that it is important for teachers of diverse students to include all

children's experiences and prior knowledge during the school day to make academic skills and

material more relevant. She also states the importance of offering lessons that cater to different

learning styles. Of the classroom environment she emphasizes the importance of safety and

appropriate challenge, whereby the teacher continually assesses where children are and develops

lessons that challenge but do not overly frustrate. She defines a safe environment as one in

which students feel respected, appreciated, and heard. Her management philosophy entails

strong routines, clear expectations, regular rewards, and consistent consequences. Barbara

identifies partnership with parents as critical and she strives to create an environment that is

inclusive of all families.

In her written statements, Barbara states the importance of teachers embracing, honoring

and encouraging different viewpoints and contributions. She views the role of teacher as a

model and change agent. She expresses her belief that public schools are not serving all of our

students well and that,

> As a teacher you have to decide if your practice is going to perpetuate the inequalities
>
> your students face or attempt to assist students and families to use school to best meet
>
> their goals. Being this kind of agent of change means recognizing how my personhood –
>
> being a white, highly educated, eastern female, may help or hinder my ability to build
>
> bridges with students and families. It means taking a humble stance and working a little
>
> harder to keep the lines of communication open and reciprocal with people who have
>
> different backgrounds and perspectives than myself. Furthermore, it means respecting

the experiences that everyone brings to the table regarding student success – have they

credentials or initials behind their name, or not.

Barbara chose the elementary in which she currently works because it is one of the most

diverse schools in the city. She makes a concerted effort to attend family and community events

because she feels it is important to learn about the school community and make herself

accessible to the students and families she serves. She identifies her social work ethic as

something that she carries with her as a teacher, which to her translates into "representing and

advocating for the inclusion of marginalized persons and groups." She views closing the

achievement gap as the "single most pressing issue for educators today" and chose to begin her

career at a Title I school to be part of the solution. Barbara chose to enroll her own son in this

school and often responds to questions and challenges from friends and family regarding this

decision, to which she responds, "If it's good enough for other children, it's good enough for my

son."

Debbie

Debbie is a Hispanic woman in her early forties who comes from a lower socioeconomic

background. Raised in rural community New Mexico, she was exposed to what she referred to

as the tri-cultural diversity that is supposedly representative of the state of New Mexico. Her

previous profession is accounting/business and she has worked in the corporate world and owned

her own business. She says she chose to pursue teaching as a second profession because through

her experience as a home school parent she came to realize the importance of education. An

additional driver was her divorce from her husband and her need to be home with her children, which the corporate environment did not allow.

Debbie attended public school in rural New Mexico and in reflecting on her experience as a learner, she reports that she thrived in school and that she had strong support from her stay-at-home mother. As a learner in schools she recalls being afraid to speak up in class and of getting up in front of the class to make presentations. She contrasts her experience with that of her own children who attend a private Montessori school, and are at ease presenting in front of their classmates and teachers. She attributes their comfort level to the safe welcoming atmosphere of their classrooms.

In her written statements about diversity, Debbie acknowledges that because "we live in an increasingly diverse society today it is important that we learn tolerance and acceptance in order to function and succeed in our everyday lives." She affirms that "each person has value and every person also has strengths that we can all benefit and learn from." Through her experience with diverse groups of people, she says she has learned valuable lessons and different points of view, perspectives, experiences, values and beliefs. She states that this experience has taught her to "have an open mind" and has helped to increase her "learning both culturally and diversely." Debbie says that through listening to different perspectives, experiences, values and beliefs, she has been enriched as a person.

When writing about her role as a teacher of diverse students, Debbie states that teachers must "help children adapt to our world, which continues to become more diverse." Debbie

believes that in order to understand a child, the teacher must value and celebrate the diversity in each child. She states,

> Each child is different and adds to the learning environment through their differences and an educator must value each child to create a safe and inclusive learning environment. As an educator, I continuously critique and bring awareness of how my own cultural perspective shapes my opinions, values, and interactions with students, parents, and other professionals and how I demonstrate sensitivity to, while celebrating ethnic differences and viewpoints. I will strive for a cooperative classroom to ensure that all students gain a respect for multiculturalism through education and family inclusion. I hope to always be sensitive and aware of my body language, tone, and words to encourage each child, and to celebrate the differences in each person.

Jason

Jason is a middle class Hispanic male in his late thirties. His first language is Spanish and second is English. After hearing about the great need for bilingual teachers in New Mexico, he decided to leave his career in broadcasting to pursue a teaching license. Also influential to his decision to enter the teaching profession is his love for children and working with them. He uses the term "maternal instinct" to describe his nurturing disposition, which he believes is a personal asset that he brings to the classroom. Jason teaches kindergarten in a charter school where many of the students are English language learners. When asked to reflect on how he perceives his role as teacher, Jason expresses the importance of being a positive role model.

As a learner in schools, Jason attended the same private bilingual school his entire school career. Jason recalls having a strong sense of belonging as a student having attended the same school from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Jason describes the students in his school as privileged. He talks about his personal sense of privilege having attended private school and being able to learn English, an opportunity that public school students did not share. Jason recalls him and his fellow classmates learning to read Dick and Jane books and says he is confused about why his students have such difficulty learning to read. Jason attributes his success as a learner to his parents whom he says always stressed the importance of being educated. As a father, Jason says he also stresses the importance of education with his own children. After graduating from high school at the age of 18, Jason moved to the states (Florida) and describes the culture shock he experienced.

In his entry-level diversity statement, Jason writes,

> I feel that my background as a Hispanic born abroad, and who is fluent in both English and Spanish, I have much to offer to students in New Mexico. Also the fact that I am a male with a bachelor's in communications, plus the father of 2 teenage boys and one 10 year old daughter, and with a solid 18 year old marriage under my belt helps me bring stability to my classroom. Raising my children has been a learning experience and as such it makes me a better teacher because I have lived first-hand what it means to be responsible for a family. Also being able to communicate with students whose first language is Spanish helps me to smooth their transition from home to school life. And as

a male in a field dominated by female teachers, I can help children between the ages of 0-8 to have a different role-model other than their father, if any at all, in their lives.

Jason believes that as a Hispanic male in the early childhood arena he can help many students learn at a faster rate, especially for "those boys who don't have a father or any other male role-model in their lives."

Of multiculturalism, Jason believes that the classes in his teacher preparation program reinforced an attitude of treating everyone with respect. He defines multicultural perspective as "acceptance of the differences among students," and moreover, "embracing those differences and bringing them into the classroom if necessary, not as a token of their culture or lifestyle, but as a part of our ever changing society." He believes teachers must be open-minded in order to deal with different family dynamics "like same gender parenting, or any other situations in which children do not have what is considered a traditional family consisting of one father, mother and possibly siblings."

Jason believes that educators are not in this profession to pass judgment on parents or students' lives, but instead to teach and to lead by example. He states his belief that

> Many parents are doing their best to give their children an opportunity to succeed against a difficult situation in their lives. This is where we as teachers must show compassion and understanding all for the benefit of that student. Many children live in poverty or inconsistent family situations that put them at risk when it comes to learning, and it is our duty to help them get the best education they can get no matter what their situations are at home.

Lori

Lori is a white female in her early thirties from an upper-middle class background. She currently teaches in an elementary school. The demographics of the schools she attended as a youth and the community in which she was raised were homogeneous, "primarily white, middle class, same religion, same styles of houses…" During her interview, Lori reflected on her upbringing in what she describes as a homogeneous suburb outside of Houston Texas and the culture shock she experienced when she moved to New Mexico. According to Lori, her exposure to and experiences with diverse populations growing up were limited.

When asked why she chose teaching as a profession, Lori reports having always wanted to be a teacher and recalls playing school and pretending to be a teacher when she was younger. Despite her interest in teaching, her father, who held an attitude of "those who can do, those who can't teach," dissuaded her. As a college student she indicates that she struggled, initially majoring in English, changing majors and eventually dropping out of college. She later returned to college and became a sign language interpreter and it was through this work experience that she says she was "reawakened" to the realization that what she really wanted to do was become a teacher. When further reflecting on her reasons for becoming a teacher, she expresses her desire to work with kids and to make a difference in their lives. As a learner in schools, Lori remembers having a love for learning and school being a fun and safe environment. "I loved my teachers I always knew my teachers liked me," she states. Lori reports that her parents really emphasized education in the home.

In her diversity statement, Lori reflects on her experience as a volunteer at a rape crisis center where she says she became "attuned to and respectful of various cultural and individual subtleties." She refers to diversity as "a word that is used frequently, but practiced rarely." Her definition of diversity is "the celebration of personal life experiences and backgrounds and it goes beyond affirmative action or token relationships to truly valuing life experiences and backgrounds." Lori believes that diversity influences identity, linguistic choices, race, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, and sexual orientation among other things.

When reflecting on how diversity translates into her teaching practices, Lori states the importance of constantly examining her own biases, perspectives, and assumptions for any lack of respect for diversity. Lori defines multicultural perspectives as the perspectives of individuals from a variety of cultures. She believes multiculturalism is "much deeper than heroes, holidays, food and customs."

Martin

Martin is a male in his early-thirties of Mexican descent. He has lived in New Mexico his entire life and grew up in a diverse community around Hispanics, Native Americans and Anglos or "cowboys" as he refers to them. A child of a single-parent household he says that he and his mother lived in poverty. A first generation high school and college graduate, Martin shared that he felt a lot of pressure to graduate from high school. However, as a college student, he says he did not get a lot of support or encouragement from family in pursuing his college degree. As a college student, Martin says he was a low-achiever and that he battled pressure from his family who believed it better for him to get a job instead of going to college, a pursuit they perceived as a waste of his time. Despite discouragement from his family, Martin earned a bachelor's degree in American studies with a focus on pop culture. He refers to his degree as a "fancy English degree."

At the time of this study, Martin was teaching at the middle school level with what he refers to as high-risk kids; "kids who get long term suspended and many who are undiagnosed special education." Martin shared that his desire to work with high-risk children is driven by the loss of his godson who had difficulty in school and struggled with attention deficit disorder. Martin believes that because he grew up in a similar situation to the students he works with; he is better poised than many of his colleagues to relate to their experiences and make a personal connection with them. Martin perceives that other teachers in his school do not understand what the kids they serve are experiencing and that there is a disconnect between teachers and the students. He expresses his frustration with his colleagues' negative attitudes, stereotypes and

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lowered expectations. Although he was a good student, Martin recalls being bored with the textbook-oriented style of instruction and lack of relevance in the curriculum.

When asked to reflect on what he learned from his experiences as a learner and how these experiences have shaped him as a teacher, Martin says that having been one of those kids he is serving, he learned how to watch out for them and make sure they don't fall through the cracks. He also says that he realizes that many of his students' parents will not or cannot advocate for their children and that he has to be an advocate for them. As a learner in classrooms, Martin says that he always held a love for reading and cannot understand why his students do not like to read. Martin views the relationship between teacher and student as a partnership, and emphasizes the importance of a safe learning environment and opportunities for students to socialize.

Randy

Randy is a Jewish, middle-class male in his late twenties. He is originally from New York and has lived in New Mexico for a little over a year. When reflecting on the reasons why he chose to pursue teaching as a profession, he shared his background. He comes from a family of teachers; his mother and father were teachers and his sister has taught in Spain and Beijing with a TESOL license. He also attributes his decision to become a teacher to his background working with kids as a camp counselor, working in youth outreach programs, and interacting with his younger cousins. In rationalizing his decision to become a teacher he emphasizes his desire to help other people.

Randy's degree is in political geography and he refers to this degree as a "nonsense degree." He says he pursued this avenue of study because he enjoys cultures and likes politics.

After graduating from college he worked in construction doing concrete labor, which he says he disliked. After moving to New Mexico he decided to pursue a career in teaching. His first position was working in a daycare with 3-year-olds. He says he loved this work and felt he was successful. This experience prompted him to enter the alternative teacher licensure program. At the time of this study, Randy was teaching seventh graders at a charter school in "south valley" on corrective action.

In his interview, Randy described the culture shock he experienced when he first started teaching in the "south valley" where the majority of the student body is English Language Learners (ELLs), Catholic, and Hispanic. He attributes this culture shock to his identity as a "Jewish New Yorker." When describing the demographics of the students he teaches he states, "You have some students who are right out of the boat from Mexico and don't even speak any English and you have some students who have been her for a long time and are basically bilingual. So, I have the whole spectrum."

As a learner in schools, Randy refers to himself as a hands-on learner that does not learn well through a lecturing approach. Because of his own learning style, he says he strives to make learning collaborative, hands-on, and to present content in ways that his students can connect to their lives and access their prior knowledge. In addition to the courses required for teacher licensure, Randy completed the endorsement coursework for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), whereby he says he gained strategies that he believes have improved his ability to work with his diverse, ELL students.

In his written statements, Randy refers to America as a "melting pot of different immigrants that have come here over the centuries." He believes that diversity offers the opportunity to learn much from other people and says that he has always supported people's diversity and welcomed the differences they may have. He considers himself "unique in his own ways" and states that he enjoys sharing and learning with other people. He views New Mexico as very different from New York culturally and environmentally and in comparing the two he refers to New York as fast paced with different core values. He believes his presence in New Mexico puts him in a position to "enhance the diversity of those around him" and says that one of his passions is "to enlighten those around him and learn more about himself."

Randy communicates his openness to others' experiences and his excitement about what he refers to as the "fascinating culture of Native Americans and what the Americas were like before imperialism." The following is an excerpt from Randy's discussion on how diversity impacts teaching and learning:

> Diversity is not only in the student's cultural background, but can be seen in the various ways that they learn. These differences are important to consider when one is pursuing a career in teaching because all styles of teaching must be utilized. Every student learns differently and it is up to the teacher to give various perspectives on subject matter.

In his entry-level diversity statement, Randy states that he has the "ability to enhance others' perspectives on the world with my own knowledge" and sees New Mexico as a great place to learn about others and himself. Also in his written statements, Randy reflects on his beliefs about diversity when he started the program versus after he completed the program.

When I started the program I believed that diversity simply meant that you will have a mix of different ethnicities in your classroom. Now I understand that diversity is not just culturally based. The diversities that exist in your classroom are numerous. For example, there are different types of learners, differences between 8th grade boys and girls, language differences, and much more. To be a good teacher one must adapt to all the diversities and differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of all their students. As I reflect on the core value of diversity I am surprised on how much the definition of the term has grown. I now try to teach my students with all their diversities in mind. I want to reach all my students and not just target the high or the low. This is exceptionally difficult in my classroom because I have a range of learners from 2nd grade to 11th grade. This large range is due to language proficiency and special needs children. However it illustrates the huge amount of diversity that exists in one classroom.

In discussing the difference between diversity and multicultural perspectives, Randy states,

At the beginning of the ATL Program I had a hard time distinguishing the difference between this core value [multiculturalism] and the core value of diversity. Now I believe that diversity is what you will see in your classroom, and a multicultural perspective is what the students bring to the classroom. For example, the parents of my students are mainly Hispanic and Mexican. They bring a very precise multicultural perspective into my classroom. These families value religion, family, and community. Education is important, but not pinnacle as in my culture. Their perspective is different and any good teacher needs to understand these differences to better teach this population. When I

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apply a multicultural perspective into my classroom I understand where my students come from and what they value.

Roger

Roger is a white, middle-class male in his early fifties. When asked why he decided to become a teacher, Roger referred to teaching is a "calling from within" for said he believes he can be a safety net for his students and has patience for middle schoolers. Roger worked in the business environment for 25 years and has chosen to teach middle school mathematics. His wife is also pursuing teaching along with him.

When asked to reflect on his experience as a student in schools, he indicated that school was difficult for him, due to the fact that he is a visual learner versus an auditory learner. He referred to the didactic style of teaching presenting a challenge for him as a learner. In regards to how his experience as a student has influenced him as a teacher, Roger indicates that he had to learn to adapt to be successful and that these adaptive skills are something that he can pass on to his students. In addition, his experience has spurred his desire to deliver content in multiple formats.

When asked if there were teachers (good or bad) that he recalls, Roger responded firmly, "I am not drawing from past teachers experience," which he attributes to not remembering much about his experiences and interactions with specific teachers. Rather than drawing from past teachers, Randy says that he has drawn from some of the observations he's had with current teachers in classrooms. In particular he spoke of one gentleman who applies brain-based teaching and whom he believes has had a powerful influence on him as a teacher. This teacher

differed from other teachers he observed in that he was able to set the mood in the classroom, spoke to the students with respect, and was not "hung up on the control, power thing." Randy stressed that he believes "kids wanna be treated with respect."

In regards to his philosophy of teaching and his beliefs about the purpose of schooling, Roger responded, "first and foremost starts with wanting to create a student-centered you know, learner-centered environment, rather than a teacher-centered environment." When defining the purpose of schooling, Roger emphasized the importance of not only teaching content and curriculum, but the need to focus on values as well. In describing his beliefs about teaching, Roger states,

> It's my job to find the cracks and crevices of the most challenging students and those will be tough times and days for me when I'm encountering a lot of challenges and I'm not finding avenues to make connections with students. And those will also be the most rewarding days when I make that connection with them. In the field experience, there were a few students that stood out in my mind as challenging kids and I worked hard at trying to make the connection with them regardless.

When asked what drives him to remain in the teaching profession, Roger states that it is his desire to be a successful, high quality teacher and to make a difference in the lives of his students. He also alludes to the fact that he's motivated intrinsically.

> When asked what his role is as a teacher of diverse students Roger responded,
>
> Not to treat them all the same or not to type cast them and to know that I have a class full of individuals. I think if I go from that perspective, I'm okay, whether it be a learning

style issue, or whether it be a cultural issues, socioeconomic issue, doesn't matter. If I

treat them all as individuals as much as possible, I'm gonna be okay.

 When asked why the achievement gap exists Roger pointed to the parents and lack of

parent involvement in their children's education. As a teacher, he feels he can make a difference

by helping students understand the importance of an education. He states,

I can tell 'em educations important. Here's what you do with an educated mind you

know? I can model and I can tell them it has nothing to do with the fact that I'm white.

It has to do with what my character is, what my values are, and if you adopt similar ones,

I can help you. I can help you find the right paths. And sometimes who you know has

something to do with it. So fine, put yourself at the right place at the right time. But you

gotta be prepared first. You gotta be willing to make some sacrifices.

Ruby

Ruby is a middle-class female in her late fifties. She decided to pursue the teaching

profession because she believes teaching will build on her past experience as a college librarian.

She is interested in doing the same work at the secondary level. Additionally, she seeks the

opportunity to work with kids. At the time of the interview, Ruby was assisting the librarian at a

middle school. Ruby self-identifies as an introvert says she was at first hesitant to enter the

teaching profession. She states, "It's one of those things, I think you know as you grow and as

you've been through different experiences you know your perspective changes."

As a learner in schools, Ruby attended public schools in Upstate New York. She

describes the demographics of her schools as 100% white, middle class, and homogeneous. Ruby

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remembers being a good student and recalled a sense of being cared for by her teachers. She also recalled being bullied in school. Ruby says that she wasn't exposed to a lot of diversity in the secondary schools she attended.

As a college student, Ruby attended a private university in New York where she majored in German and minored in liberal arts. Having attended public schools, she felt less prepared for college than many of the other students who came from preparatory schools. She spent her sophomore year living in Vienna, which gave her an opportunity to travel around Western Europe. In college, she was exposed to more cultural diversity and she describes her overall college experience as positive.

In reflecting on how her experience as a learner has shaped her as a teacher, Ruby says that she has developed an appreciation for diversity and an interest in people of other cultures. She states, "We're really all kind of the same in some respects then we all have our uniqueness as cultures and that just really interests me how we're you know like the Tower of Babel and all the different languages." She believes that language is really a reflection of the culture and that if you understand the language you can "see how they're thinking, they're cultural attitudes shape, is shaped by you know and reflected in their language." Ruby says she likes differences and learning about people who have different perspectives from her.

In her written diversity statement, Ruby indicates that her background is "filled with experiences related to diversity." She has lived in the northeastern, southeastern, and southwestern United States and traveled to many places in between. Ruby says that she moved to New Mexico because of the multicultural history and population. Ruby has also traveled to

Canada, Mexico, Western Europe, and Moscow. As a young adult, she took classes in German and learned the language. Ruby claims to have a fascination for diversity and has a desire to increase her understanding and appreciation of cultural perspectives. She believes that knowing a language one can better understand the culture. Through her experience as a college librarian, Ruby says that she has interacted with diverse populations.

Also in her written diversity statement, Ruby communicates what she believes to be her goals as an educator in relation to diversity. First, she believes that she has to be a positive role model. Second, she believes that she has to do her part to "help create an environment conducive to learning that acknowledges and respects different perspectives." Ruby also expresses her desire for all students to be successful "irrespective of their ethnic or language background, or other differences." As an educator, she believes that students need to learn how to interact in a diverse environment and educators must set the example. In her interview, Ruby expressed her belief that "diversity is a really good thing" and that "students learn from each other so at a young age they can start to appreciate differences in people and understand that and tolerate differences, and develop a respect for, for the differences." Ruby uses the melting pot metaphor to illustrate her thoughts on diversity,

> I really enjoy and appreciate, the different cultures and I don't want to see everybody like become a carbon copy of everybody else like I want students to remain individuals and honor their cultural background because I think that's what makes us really interesting as a country, as a people, and I don't think we should try to make everybody fit the same mold. I think everybody can be successful without that.

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When reflecting on her philosophy of education, Ruby said that she believes the purpose of education is to "really get students to use their minds," and that students need opportunities to discover and uncover things for themselves instead of lecture-based learning. She believes students become more actively engaged if you give them choices about their learning. As a classroom teacher, Ruby tries to make lessons relevant to her students' lives because she believes that through this approach, students are more apt to be engaged and interested. She feels really strongly about experiential learning. She sees the role of teacher as more of a facilitator who can "activate their critical thinking."

Ruth

Ruth is a Navajo woman in her late-forties who grew up in a community in Colorado where her family was the only Native American family. She is a Yale graduate of the College of Graphic Design. When asked why she decided to enter the teaching profession, Ruth talks about having a calling to inspire and to connect with children. Throughout her interview, she expresses a desire to make a difference in the lives of her students and to inspire and connect with them.

As a learner, Ruth recalls having to "overcome a lot of diversity and a lot of separation issues from anxiety, the culture, and class." She grew up in poverty and struggled as a student in schools. Ruth says she was placed in special education from second through eleventh grade because "teachers really didn't know what to do" with her. Ruth expresses feelings of being stereotyped and marginalized in school and being overlooked by teachers. Having experienced these things, she voices her commitment not to judge students because of who they are, where they come from, or the clothes that they wear.

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Ruth says she graduated from high school not knowing how to read and write and unprepared for college. She attributes this to her teachers "writing her off as incapable" and her placement in special education for her entire school career. As a college student in early adulthood, she recalls a continued struggle with the messages she received as a learner in secondary schools. She refers to, "all these lies that I would tap into every now and then that I couldn't learn and that I couldn't communicate, that I couldn't read, that I couldn't write, that I was stupid, that I was awkward, that I was diverse." She attributes her difficulty with learning to dyslexia and audible hearing issues.

In her written statements, Ruth expresses a strong desire to become a teacher and views her background and experiences as assets. She views herself as diverse because of her "heritage, ethnicity, education, and desire." In describing her educational background she places an emphasis on her minority status, "only 1% of the population was like me."

Also in her written statements, Ruth discusses the importance of critically reflective practice and "keeping an open mind of what she is perceiving in class." When reflecting on her understanding of multicultural perspectives, she states, "As a Native American, I don't believe that I have to think multicultural, I am multicultural. As I look from the inside out of this multicultural perspective, we as people must respect any person outside of our social, cultural understanding." Ruth emphasizes the importance of "keeping what is the student's background and family life as a fuel toward our classroom learning goals."

When asked to reflect on the program and how it prepared her for teaching diverse students, Ruth states that the through the program, she has "grown to welcome diversity by

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respecting people for who they are. Everyone is valuable and to understand people and where they are intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually helps us to understand a sense of appreciation for them and the human race." When explaining how her value for diversity translates into her own practices as an educator, Ruth states, "I search for ways of how I can serve them [students], understand them and learn from them. If I cannot find ways to connect with them using traditional methods, I try and find my own."

Shelly

Shelly is a middle class, white female in her late thirties. She was raised in the Midwest and is the first person in her family to earn a college degree. When asked to reflect on her own experience as a learner in schools, Shelly describes the demographics of her elementary school as very homogenous, "mostly white middle class student body and teachers." However, in her last year of high school the schools in her state became desegregated and her own school in downtown Kansas City went from 100% white to 70% Black. That year they bussed over 1,200 Black students to her school and she recalls the overcrowding and lack of enough resources. Shelly describes her father as "prejudiced and not wanting his family to live in a community with Black people." She recalls experiencing much racial tension as her school underwent desegregation.

At the time of this study, Shelly was teaching special education in an adolescent residential charter school. Her first profession is broadcast communication and she has worked as a professional disc jockey. According to Shelly, her 10 years of experience working with kids as a treatment foster caretaker spurred her interest in becoming a teacher. When asked to reflect

on her reasons for choosing to pursue teaching as a profession, Shelly recalls frequently playing school as a child.

As a learner, Shelly reports that although she really liked school, she had problems with reading all the way through. She describes herself as a slow reader and says that she recalls receiving some type of therapy for her issue. She recalls the embarrassment she felt getting pulled out of class to undergo this therapy. Even as an adult Shelly still struggles with reading, but says that she has been able to find ways to cope. Despite the fact that she's always struggled with reading, Shelly proclaims a great love for literature and reading but says that she just has to work hard at it. She attributes her interest in working with special education students to her own struggles as a learner in schools. Her written statement reinforces that her passion for teaching comes from her bad experiences as a learner and not being a good reader. Shelly believes the role of the teacher is to "find strategies that work so that her students can feel successful and so that they can realize their potential and feel smart."

Shelly defines diversity as "celebrating the uniqueness of everyone; students, staff, and the greater school community." She refers to multiculturalism as the "family structures, economic status, religious beliefs, and the values of people." As a teacher of diverse students, she encourages students in her classroom to "respect one another and to share their cultural experiences to improve learning." Shelly says she favors the use of project-based learning as a means to foster a collaborative culture in her classroom. She believes special education students don't often get the opportunity to learn in ways other than what she describes as independent learning environments.

Susan

Susan is a white, middle-class female in her early fifties. She has a master's degree in cultural anthropology and geography and worked for the USDA conducting surveys in rural communities. It was through this experience that she says she discovered her desire to become a teacher. She began her teaching career as a substitute teacher and after a few years, decided to pursue an alternative teacher licensure program. Susan was raised in Monterrey California and moved to New Mexico as a young adult. When asked to further reflect on her reasons for becoming a teacher, she spoke of her attraction to the interactive nature of teaching and how she enjoys working with kids. She refers to teaching as the most enjoyable job she's ever had. She considers herself a human rights advocate, which she views as important to the role of teaching. As a learner in schools, Susan attended a Montessori school in Monterey California and she recalls having a very positive experience as a student in schools. She didn't pursue college until she turned forty.

In her written statements, Susan expresses how diversity, "in all its tangible and intangible forms, is necessary for healthy human interaction, improved critical thinking skills and an enhanced quality of life." She believes that educational institutions have "both an opportunity and responsibility to promote an understanding of, and respect for, diversity in an increasingly global environment." She believes it is important to appreciate diversity in the human population and in the natural world.

Also in her written statements, Susan reflects on what an appreciation for diversity means to her. She states, "Appreciation for diversity is about more than ethnic or racial differences, but

also includes embracing sexual orientations, community practices, learning styles, belief systems and one's general presentation in the world. There are a variety of cultural, philosophical, physical and intellectual beliefs and abilities in a classroom."

As a teacher, Susan believes she needs to be aware that what she teaches will be received and expressed differently by each student depending on their life experiences, abilities and beliefs. She believes that her students' have enriched her knowledge of and value for diversity because of the unique and diverse needs and perspectives they bring to the classroom. In terms of meeting the needs of diverse learners, Susan's instructional approach involves the use of differentiated instruction, which she believes is important because it gives students a variety of ways to express their ideas and knowledge. In the classroom, Susan strives to give students experiences that "help them to realize that the world is not a two dimensional place, but that it is a rich, vibrant, interactive and inclusive of our unique perspectives, experiences and practices."

Tammy

Tammy is a female of color in her early sixties raised in the Philippines. She has a business degree and worked for NASA for 15 years. She also has experience as a television scriptwriter and as a puppeteer. When asked why she chose teaching as a profession she said that she has a "knack for educating children through puppetry." She believes that if teachers "present content to kids in an interesting manner it will stick to them." After she moved to New Mexico in her mid-fifties she decided to become substitute teacher and it was through this initial teaching experience that she realized she had a "knack for teaching elementary kids." It was at that point that she decided to pursue the alternative teacher licensure program.

In her interview, Tammy often compares education and cultural values in relation to schooling in the Philippines to her perceptions of the same in the United States. As a student in the Philippines Tammy says she was not able to question the authority of the teacher and did not engage in dialogue with other students. Classrooms were very traditional and the teacher was the ultimate authority. She also expressed her belief that the people in the Philippines valued education and held high academic expectations for their children, whereas here in the states, she believes she believes this is "greatly lacking." Her experience as a learner in the Philippines has taught her "the importance of admitting to your mistakes as a teacher, encouraging discussion and questioning among students, and making lessons interesting for students."

When asked to share her philosophy of education, Tammy says she believes "experiential learning is important for students to connect with their own realities," and that "students don't really learn just from textbooks." She believes there is a "tripod of success that consists of the teacher, the student, and the parents." "When one is lacking", she explains, "success is harder for the student to attain." Tammy believes the purpose of schooling is "to make better citizens not liabilities to society." Throughout her interview and interaction in the focus group, she continually emphasized her view of education as a great privilege that should be valued more by its recipients.

When reflecting on the reasons for the achievement gap, Tammy honed in on the parents and the need for them to emphasize the importance of education with their children. Her next area of focus was on the students, who she believes are not motivated, have poor attitudes about school, and don't value the "free" education they are receiving. When stating these assertions,

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she is comparing U.S. parents and students to parents and students in the Philippines where she was raised and experienced schooling.

In her written statement, Tammy reflects on her experience as an immigrant to the U.S., and her feelings of being ostracized because of her heritage, religion, culture and tradition. In comparing American students to foreign students as in the Philippines and Korea, she expresses her belief that "foreign students are more disciplined and predictable than American students." Her definition of diversity entails "looking at students in a broader perspective and recognizing their unique abilities."

As far as strategies for teaching diverse students, Tammy believes that it important to "apply different learning strategies to engage students, use more individualizes assessments that focus on progress, and address the fact that socio-economic status plays an important part in a child's learning." She believes it is the responsibility of the teacher to "make sure that textbooks are not biased and that they include multicultural issues; include students' cultures as part of school activities and discussions; encourage students to respect and understand other cultures and religions; and to encourage students to express themselves."

Theresa

Theresa is a white, middle class, Jewish female in her early thirties who grew up in the east coast. She moved to New Mexico as an adolescent. Her educational background includes psychology and biological anthropology and she has experience as a researcher. When asked why she chose to pursue teaching as a profession, Theresa expresses her desire to help to close the achievement gap. Her focus is on early childhood, where says she believes she can make the

most difference. In her interview, she expressed an overall passion for making a difference through her role as a teacher.

As a learner, Theresa attended both private and public schools. She describes the approach to teaching and learning in the private schools she attended as hands-on and individualized. Because of her experience in this type of learning environment, she says she approaches her own teaching in this way. Theresa describes the demographics of her elementary school and community as "mostly Caucasian and middle and upper-middle class." She describes her middle school a more ethnically diverse; high population of African American and Hispanics.

When reflecting on her experience as a learner in public schools, Theresa expresses her dismay with how students were treated and her desire to treat her own students differently—with respect. Theresa also recalls her own boredom as a learner in the public schools she attended due to the textbook focus. In high school, Theresa attended another private school, which she perceived as more interesting and engaging due to the interactive nature and the seminar-based instructional method.

As a teacher of diverse students in a high-need school, Theresa sees her role as "being open minded and open to diversity, seeking out information about and getting to know families that your students come from, being aware of your perceptions and trying to set aside any that are negative, and incorporating appropriate multicultural literature." She also believes that it is important to teach students critical thinking and questioning skills as well as creativity. She

identifies adaptability and flexibility as important characteristics of teachers of diverse students. Philosophically she believes all children can learn regardless of disability or background.

In her written statements, Theresa refers to herself as an artist and she believes that her experiences as an artist have helped her to gain respect for differences in self-expression. Through her experience growing up in a diverse community in Taos, New Mexico, she feels she gained an appreciation for Native American and Hispanic culture. She attributes her diverse experiences to personal traits of flexibility and openness to new experiences. Theresa says she has a deep understanding for religious tolerance and diversity.

In reference to working with diverse students and their families, Theresa believes it is important to listen and develop an understanding of others who have different beliefs from one's own. Theresa expresses an interest in cross-cultural differences in decision-making styles. As a graduate assistant at a university, she reports having hands-on experience with very diverse students. In her interview, Theresa describes diversity as an asset that makes for a rich sort of learning experience.

Conclusion

Most of the participants are white and middle-class, come from homogenous, white, and middle class backgrounds and have had minimal encounters with diverse populations. The racial cultural mismatch was evident in this participant sample, making the participants prone to dysconcious racism and hegemonic ideologies that have the potential to promote rather than negate racism in their schools and classrooms.

On the surface, all of the participants communicate a belief that all students can learn and be successful and the desire to teach in ways that support the learning of all students regardless of race, class, gender, etc. I would describe the general theoretical perspective of the participants as functionalist and their positioning as liberal and politically correct. From a liberal and politically correct framework, concepts such as respect, appreciation, tolerance understanding and celebration of diversity are the focal points versus a critical framework where race is the central focus among other subjectivities. From a functionalist theoretical perspective, education as a system and schools as parts of the larger system are viewed as neutral, fair and equal, thus providing a level playing field for all players within the system. This perspective is problematic because it serves to "normalize and perpetuate racism by ignoring the structural inequalities that permeate social institutions" (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 250). Throughout the analysis, an important charge for me as the researcher was to differentiate between what may be the participants' naivety (lack of race awareness) and what is actually resistance tied to an investment in whiteness.

The next two chapters I present a critical analysis of the participants' written diversity statements and the interview and focus group transcripts revealing the hegemonic ideologies (i.e., individualism, cultural deficit, meritocracy, and colorblindness) that surfaced across the participants' discourse. Chapter five builds on the participant self-portraits presented in chapter four capturing a more critical portrait of them. In chapter six, the analysis focuses on how the participants define and interpret the achievement gap. The focus group questions were

particularly powerful in drawing out the participants' ideologies related to the phenomenon of

the achievement gap.

Chapter 5: Participant Perceptions and Positionality

This chapter will present findings related to the participants' perceptions about diversity, how they situate and position themselves as teachers within diverse and complex social contexts and how they approach their practice as teachers within these contexts. This chapter is important because it not only illuminates the participants' perceptions and positionality related to diversity, buy it also provides insights into the program's theoretical orientation and approach to diversity and multiculturalism. Analysis of the participants' discourse revealed three major findings. First, the participants understand and approach diversity and multiculturalism from the conservative and liberal perspective with more of a bent towards the liberal perspective (Jenks et al., 2001; McLaren, 1994; Nylund, 2006). Although a few exhibit evolving perspectives that have elements that can be characterized as critical, none of the participants approach diversity from a critical multicultural perspective. In fact, the analysis of their discourse exposed a number of hegemonic ideologies (i.e., whiteness, cultural deficit, individualism, and meritocracy).

Second, the participants, whether consciously or subconsciously, exhibited whiteness-at-Work (Yoon, 2012) or discursive structures that detracted from racism. For example, the participants' broad and general definitions were reflective of the cultural competence model, which tends to "equalize oppressions under a multicultural umbrella and unintentionally promotes color-blind mentality that eclipses the significance of racism" (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 245). Although, the participants were asked direct questions about racism, their discourse steered away from racism and focused more on poverty as a root cause of inequity and the achievement gap. The hegemonic ideologies that were unveiled through their discourse also

served to detract from issues of race and racism. Specifically, colorblind racism served as a barricade between the participants and racial reality (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). It is still unclear to me as the researcher whether the participants' "avoidance of race" (Hoffman-Kipp et al., 2003) was intentional (they are conscious of racism and the role of schools in perpetuating it, but choose to resist or avoid acknowledging it as a root cause of inequity); or whether this is subconscious or dysconcious (King, 1991) and reflects a lack of critical consciousness on the part of the participants. However, the terms "subconscious" and "dysconcious" do not mean that the participants lack knowledge of whiteness; rather, these terms allude to the repression of racial knowledge. As individuals that exist within a racialized society, the participants cannot be viewed as naïve beings that are oblivious to or ignorant of the construct of whiteness. To do so would give credence to the myth of white ignorance (Leonardo, 2009), when a more accurate explanation would be that the participants have become entangled in a "white ideology that simultaneously alludes to and eludes a critical understanding of racial stratification" (p. 109). I also believe that their avoidance of race stems from a discomfort with the topic and a fear of appearing racist.

Third, although the participants have a general understanding of culturally responsive teaching, and may have developed competency in some aspects of it, they do not exhibit an awareness of why teaching differently is important (acknowledgement of racism), nor are they necessarily invested in teaching in ways that are liberating, empowering and counter-hegemonic. They do not view their work from an anti-racist perspective. Again, it is not clear whether this is due to a lack of critical consciousness or if they are aware but have consciously chosen to ignore or disregard racism as an issue. However, because of the way in which critical reflection was addressed in the program, the participants did not have an opportunity to engage in the

unlearning of racism that is so instrumental to the development of critical consciousness. Lacking in critical consciousness, the participants may have achieved a cognitive awareness of the need to teach in more culturally responsive ways to meet the needs of diverse students, but they have not reached a level of investment (political) in dismantling racism, whereby the primary weapon in their arsenal is counter-hegemonic pedagogy. Additionally, they are not able to articulate how they would achieve culturally relevant teaching operationally in a classroom.

The remainder of this chapter will present the general findings followed by a deeper analysis around these three major findings. However, before presenting the analysis, it is important to first address the teacher licensure pathway that the participants have chosen to pursue and the implications of this to the teaching of diverse students. The way in which the participants were prepared is an important consideration and has informed my analysis of the data. This section also presents a backdrop of alternative licensure in New Mexico, which has provided the pathway for the participants in this study to enter the teaching profession.

Alternative Licensure

The state of New Mexico allows for alternative routes for teacher licensure including a portfolio route, a district pathway, and an approved program of study that includes a supervised field experience or student teaching experience. As with other states, a significant number of teachers are prepared through alternative routes. Between 2007 and 2012, a total of 8,682 level-one teaching licenses were issued. Of those licenses, 1,080 were issued through an alternative licensure pathway. There are specific requirements for these programs including the number of college credit hours (minimum of 12 and maximum of 21) and the number of hours of student teaching required.

Alternative licensure was approved in New Mexico because of the shortage of teachers and as a means to expand the number of teacher preparation programs in the state, as well as the number of institutions that offer such programs. The alternative licensure route attracts into the teaching profession those who already hold at least a four-year degree into the teaching profession. As with the participants in this study, alternatively licensed teachers come from a wide array of backgrounds and are able to bring real-world work and life experiences with them into the classroom. Many of these teachers are middle-aged and bring a level of maturity that is generally not mirrored in traditional teacher preparation routes. More pertinent to this study, alternative licensure routes also have the potential to attract a more diverse pool of teachers than traditional routes.

Similar to new teachers who are prepared through traditional routes, alternatively licensed teachers will most likely end up teaching in high-need schools that serve high percentages of children of color of lower socioeconomic status. Preparing these teachers to be successful with these students is a great challenge, especially in light of current educational reform and resulting mandates that teachers have to abide by in their classrooms (i.e., canned curriculum, assessments, standardization, focus on reading and math with less focus on other core subjects). Adding an additional layer of challenge, alternatively licensed teachers receive minimal preparation in terms of the number of courses/credit hours and clinical experiences, as compared to teachers who come out of traditional routes.

The initial intent of alternative licensure routes was to recruit individuals with degrees in the core content areas (e.g., math, science, English). However, with this sample, many of the participants come from non-core content areas such as art, social sciences, business, and other areas. It is common for alternative licensure candidates to choose the teaching profession due to

the current state of the economy and the dismal job market in New Mexico. One of the criticisms of teacher preparation in general is that teachers do not have adequate content area knowledge and content specific pedagogy to teach effectively. However, many alternatively licensed teachers come with at least an undergraduate degree in a content area and in some cases work experience in the content area, potentially making them "content area experts." Although alternative routes do have the potential to recruit teachers who are better prepared in the content areas, this is not necessarily assured.

Given the racial/cultural mismatch that exists between teachers and the students that they teach, and because many alternatively licensed teachers end up working in diverse and challenging school environments, it is critical that these teachers be well prepared and are effective at teaching diverse students, navigating challenging school environments, and fulfilling the role of advocate for student learning. It is also essential that these teachers develop the critical consciousness that incites anti-racist and counter hegemonic teaching practices. To accomplish this they have to engage in an unlearning of racism, which requires a critical examination of self, uncovering any racism, stereotypes, prejudices, pre-conceived notions or biases that they may hold and coming to a clear understanding of the impact these may have on their teaching and, in turn, their students. Creating structured and focused opportunities for teachers to engage in critical reflection that develops critical consciousness is a major challenge even within the traditional path of preparing teachers. Given the condensed program that alternative licensure teacher candidates receive, this can be especially challenging.

It is also critical that teachers gain an extensive understanding of diversity and what it means to be an effective teacher of diverse students. The strategies that teachers choose to use in the classroom may contribute to the achievement gap and the continued oppression of children of

color, limiting their potential and opportunity. Illustrative of this is the general understanding of the participants' concept of differentiation and their application of differentiated instruction in the classroom. For some, differentiation equates with lowered expectations.

Unless teachers develop a critical lens through which they can analyze and problematize their school environments, it is unlikely that they will recognize and challenge hegemonic ideologies, policies, practices, and structures that contribute to the continued oppression of children of color. Armed with this critical lens, teachers can serve as advocates for students, challenge policies and practices that perpetuate inequity, and intentionally engage in counter-hegemonic pedagogy. Without this lens, teachers will likely assimilate into the culture of these schools and blindly accept and promote the whiteness ideology of the school, not recognizing the negative impact it may have on students.

The participants in this study completed the same community college-based alternative teacher licensure (ATL) program, which required a common core curriculum with specific course requirements per licensure level, i.e., early childhood, elementary, secondary and special education. The program's conceptual framework consists of core values that include critical reflection, diversity, multicultural perspectives and social justice. These core values are structured to drive the program curriculum with the intent that the participants will adopt these values and put them into practice. The participants in this study (all candidates or graduates of this program) communicate varying understandings of these values and concepts, and have difficulty articulating how they apply these values and concepts within their practices. All of the participants in this study communicate positive intentions and a desire to serve diverse students well. The participants' written statements and responses to the interview and focus group questions do not indicate that the program exposed the participants to a critical analysis of

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whiteness. They do not appear to have developed a critical lens that would incite them to identify and challenge inequitable practices in their school settings and to recognize the role they play in either promoting or negating racism.

It is evident that alternative licensure has increased the number of licensed teachers in New Mexico. However, because of its condensed and short term structure, it is questionable that the participants can be deemed well-prepared in relation to mastery of the general teacher competencies, much less in the areas of diversity and multiculturalism. On the surface, the program's focus on preparing critically reflective teachers appears to hold some promise of preparing critically reflective educators, who, at a minimum are culturally competent and able to teach in culturally relevant ways. However, critical reflection for this particular program focuses on the technical aspects of teaching. Reflection on practice and using this reflection to improve instruction is emphasized versus deep reflection on self, exposure and interrogation of ideologies that have the potential to promote racism and inequity in classrooms, and the unlearning of racism. While reflection on practice is important to continuous improvement of instruction, underlying ideologies shape and drive practices. As such, critical reflection must interrogate the underlying hegemonic ideologies head on (Kumagi & Lypson, 2009). The participants do not appear to recognize the power they have to transform learning for the traditionally underserved populations they teach and do not acknowledge institutional racism or situate themselves as contributors to the maintenance or disruption of this system. In some cases, these teachers have even come to accept the dire conditions of their students as natural societal consequences, revealing a functionalist perspective of education. A critical study of whiteness with the primary goal of illuminating the "every day, invisible, subtle, cultural and social practices, ideas and codes that discursively secure the power and privilege of white people, but that strategically

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remains unmarked, unnamed, and unmapped in contemporary society" (Shome, 1996, p. 503) was absent from this program.

General Findings—Participant Preparation & Perceptions of Diversity

This section of the chapter will summarize the general findings of this study. Sections that then follow will address the specific findings supported by analysis. During the individual interviews, the participants were asked to reflect on the question, "How well do you think the program prepared you as a teacher of diverse students in high-need and low-performing schools?" In general, the participants communicated a sense of being well-prepared to teach diverse students in high-need and low-performing schools and felt that the program addressed diversity and multiculturalism adequately. However, the participants could not articulate specific ways in which the program prepared them to work effectively with diverse students. All of the participants cited the core values of critical reflection, diversity, and multicultural perspectives, but could not pinpoint how these were addressed operationally in the program aside from the final core values reflection paper, which was required for exiting the program. A few of the participants cited elements of the program that were not necessarily part of the program's structure or curriculum. For example, the diverse demographics of the candidates in the program were noted as contributing to their preparation for working with diverse students. This is noteworthy in light of the fact that most of the participants have limited experiences with diverse populations.

The analysis of the participants' discourse revealed that diversity was presented in race-neutral, superficial, fragmented, and "tokenistic" ways that did not address institutional racism or engage participants in a critique of whiteness. The program's approach can be likened to what Ladson-Billings (1998) refers to as manifestations of multicultural education that are superficial

and trivial celebrations of diversity, whereby rather than engaging in "provocative thinking about the contradictions of U.S. ideals and lived realities, teachers often find themselves encouraging students to sing 'ethnic' songs, eat ethnic foods, and do ethnic dances" (p. 22). Through this liberal approach to diversity, whiteness continues to influence what these teachers believe, how they approach their work with children and families of color, and is invisible and remains unnamed and unmarked (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011).

How the topic of diversity was addressed within the program varied by faculty, course and program strand (early childhood, secondary, elementary, and special education) and there was not a required course within the program specifically devoted to the coverage of diversity and multicultural education. According to the director of the program, the core values of diversity and multiculturalism were interwoven throughout the program's curriculum and coursework. It appears that through this approach race was diffused through "diluted curricula that spans many groups with 'a little something for everyone,'" (Le-Doux & Montalvo, 1999, p. 49) thereby reinforcing a colorblind ideology versus race consciousness. The participants' discourse revealed that diversity was not addressed in depth and it was presented in ways that were disconnected from racism and power relations, following a cultural competence model versus a critical multicultural model. In all of the participants' definitions of diversity, race was folded in with a multitude of diversities (i.e., gender, age, learning styles) in ways that downplayed the centrality of race and ignored racism. This does not appear to be conscious or intentional, but rather a result of how diversity was presented in the program (liberal multicultural framework). All of the participants' definitions of diversity are provided later in this chapter.

The program approached diversity from a liberal and politically correct framework, whereby racism was not made explicit. This is clearly reflected in the program's stance on the concepts of diversity and multicultural perspectives. The core values of diversity and multicultural perspectives as stated in the program handbook follow:

Diversity: We respect the diversity that students bring to the classroom and as such model inclusive teaching and learning practices in which students' diverse needs are not only met but also celebrated as integral to meaningful learning experiences.

Multicultural Perspectives: We embrace the various cultural perspectives that shape the diverse communities in which we live and thus emphasize knowledge of how multicultural perspectives shape the context of our interactions with community and our construction of meaning, and skills for working in multicultural environments.

The use of the terms, respect, inclusive, celebrated, and embrace are all representative of the liberal multicultural framework and were common terms across all of the participants' definitions of diversity. It is clear that the participants developed a liberal multicultural stance, which was core to the conceptual framework of the program. Thus, it is fair to state that the program was successful in the transmission of the core values from a liberal multicultural framework. However, terms such as race, racism and whiteness are absent from the program's definitions and respectively, the participants' definitions. Thus, it is likely the participants did not develop an understanding of the saliency of race that would enable them to recognize and counter racism through anti-racist pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Further insights were gained as to the program's approach to diversity through the participants' reflections on the program faculty. Only one faculty member was cited as approaching diversity from a critical perspective, actually exposing candidates to critical race

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theory. However, only a couple of the participants took a course with her. One other faculty member was cited as promoting critical thinking and analysis as he required students to read and analyze a multitude of articles related to the various course topics, diversity among these topics. While the participants communicated the belief that in general program faculty make a concerted effort to address the core values of the program, it does not appear that the core values of diversity and multicultural perspectives were addressed from a race-centered framework.

Although the program is supposed to focus on social justice, through the analysis it became apparent that the program fostered a functionalist theoretical perspective that is illustrative of the span between the conservative and liberal frameworks (Jenks et al., 2001; McLaren, 1997; Webster, 1997). Coming from a functionalist theoretical perspective, the participants communicated their belief in a 'just world,' meaning a fundamentally fair and equal society, and a lack of recognition of the realities of racism (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 250). They did not engage in critique or analysis of schools or educational institutions and for the most part they communicated a view of schools as level playing fields—neutral, fair and equal.

The table below defines the three frameworks for multicultural education:

Conservative Melting Pot/Uniculturalism	Liberal Tossed Salad/Cultural Pluralism	Critical Equitable power distribution
-Assimilation into mainstream culture -Equity achieved through assimilation and elimination of cultural deficits -Cultural homogeneity ideology -Free-market (individualism, meritocracy, competition) -Same standards for all -Cultural difference a non-issue -Teacher's role: bridge gaps that exist between the mainstream culture and that of the "culturally different"	-Acceptance and celebration of difference (feel-good approach) -Equity and excellence achieved through acceptance, tolerance, and understanding -Does not consider power relations, dominance, and oppression -Humanistic affirmation of democratic ideals and naïve belief that a curriculum that fosters these ideals will bring about change -Champion equal educational opportunity but supports the dominant culture and its hegemonic power -Limited analysis of why inequities exist in the first place, as well as simplistic conceptions of culture and identity	-Believe schools impose standards on children that reinforce power relationships and social stratification (curriculum policy committed to white, middle class values that deny the powerless and disenfranchised equal access to knowledge. -Equity and excellence can only be achieved by interrogation of how they are constructed and how they can be achieved in a society in which historically, the dominant culture has determined their meanings. -Seeks justice by focusing on the relationships between equity and excellence on the one hand and race, ethnic and class configurations on the other -Knowledge is not value-free but shaped culturally, historically, ethnically, and linguistically -Histories and narratives of subordinate groups are an essential part of the school curriculum. -A not-so-hidden curriculum created by those in power reflects the social inequalities of society and schools, in spite of cultural celebrations of difference sponsored by liberal educators.

(Jenks et al., 2001; McLaren, 1997)

Most programs approach diversity from the "liberal or conservative multicultural perspective that precludes a power analysis and a critical discussion of whiteness" (Nylund, 2006, p. 27). The conservative multicultural perspective posits that equity is achieved through assimilation into the mainstream (dominant culture) and elimination of cultural deficits. From this perspective the goal is cultural homogeneity whereby white becomes the "invisible norm by which other ethnicities are judged" (McLaren, 1994, p. 49), thereby reinforcing the ideology of whiteness. Liberal multiculturalism can be characterized as a "feel-good" approach that focuses on acceptance and celebration of difference. From this perspective, equity is achieved through tolerance and understanding and the goal is cultural pluralism. "To counter racism and white supremacist ideologies, liberalism is not a mechanism for substantive, real change" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 1335). Liberal multiculturalism "tends to exoticize others in a nativistic retreat that locates difference in a primeval past of cultural authenticity" (Perry, 2002, p. 196). Similar

to conservative multiculturalism, there is an absence of a "discussion of whiteness, leaving it the unmarked norm against which other racial and ethnic groups are compared" (Nylund, 2006, p. 29). "While there have been significant contributions made by liberal multiculturalism, honoring differences in this essentialist way does not necessarily undermine racism or other social inequalities and may reproduce stereotyping (Nylund, 2006, p. 29).

When discussing diversity, the participants' tendency was to paint diversity solely in a positive light, characteristic of liberal multiculturalism's "feel-good" approach to diversity, where the focus is on celebration, inclusion and sharing of cultures. A good example of this is Barbara's reflection on what diversity means to her:

> Yeah I mean it [diversity], I just think it's [diversity] the neatest thing. I mean, you know but it, it is challenging...I just think diversity enriches a school. I think it's totally awesome...I mean I juggle because I feel like diversity is awesome and it enriches us and I love living here. I feel like I have so much to learn coming from a not diverse place to here, you know, and I love feeling like I could step into different communities and be embraced and learn.

Other examples of this will be presented in this chapter.

Although challenging to spot within discourse that was clouded by political correctness and possibly fear of coming across as racist or prejudiced, most of the participants exhibited the assimilation ideology, which is characteristic of the conservative framework. Also characteristic of the conservative framework, deficit thinking and ideology permeated the participants' discourse especially their discourse related to the phenomenon of the achievement gap.

There was a general perception among the participants that good teaching is good teaching, regardless of who the students are. In other words, the participants did not see teaching

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diverse students as a specific skill set or area of competency to be developed, nor did they see diverse students as having specific or unique needs or that they might experience schooling differently from their white peers. This "success for all" and same approach and standards for all is characteristic of the conservative framework. This stance held by the participants is problematic because "even with access to a broader repertoire of teaching strategies, many teachers struggle to be effective with students of diverse racial, cultural, linguistic and economic backgrounds" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

The program's curriculum did not address cultural competence or culturally relevant teaching specifically, nor were these terms present in the program's conceptual framework or core values. Although the participants alluded to aspects of culturally responsive teaching in their discourse, they did not refer specifically to culturally responsive teaching as something that was promoted within the program. When asked if there is a specific skill set that teachers need to apply in order to be effective with diverse students, the general response was, "no," and teaching strategies cited were referred to in terms of benefitting all students, not just students of color. The perception that good teaching is good teaching irrespective of who the students are negates issues of inequity, racism, and schools structured around the ideology of whiteness. Further, this perception negates the centrality of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995a) to the success of diverse students. "Avoidance of race" and "race neutral ideology" (Hoffman-Kipp et al., 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1999) persisted across the participants' discourse.

There was also a general perception among participants that students enter schools at a disadvantage that stems from the home environment. This perception may be tied to the way in which social justice was presented and approached within the program. While the participants' discourse addressed the importance of diversity, specifically in relation to meeting students

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individual learning needs (ability levels and learning styles), they lacked a general understanding that diverse students have the challenge of navigating as learners within school environments that are not designed to promote their success but rather place them at a disadvantage. This perception is in alignment with the conservative framework, which asserts that "social mobility leading to equality comes from assimilation that requires the elimination of certain differences or deficits in knowledge, skills, and values that serve as barriers" (Jenks et al., 2001, p. 91) to upward social mobility. The deficit ideology places teachers in the role of repairing or compensating for what is happening or not happening in the home environment. Further, it supports more of an assimilation approach where the key to success is viewed as the ability of students to conform to the ways of the school that don't necessarily value the students' ways of being and understanding the world. Approaching their work from this perspective, teachers take on the role of authority where they see themselves as compensating for what may be lacking in the home or in helping parents and families develop the skills and strategies that promote academic achievement—skills that they believe are deficient or non-existent. Teaching parents and families to adopt the values and practices of the dominant class becomes the goal versus transforming the learning environment and instruction in ways that better attend to the needs of diverse students. Rather than problematizing schooling and engaging in a more complex and comprehensive analysis of the underachievement of diverse students, teachers who embrace deficit thinking place the blame for under achievement on the students and families, detracting from deficits in schooling that may be perpetuating racism, inequality and the gaps in achievement and opportunity that plague schools.

General Findings: Participant Definitions & Perceptions (Whiteness-At-Work)

The participants communicated their perceptions about diversity through the individual interviews, focus groups and written statements. They had an opportunity to share their individual definitions of diversity and engage in dialogue around the topics of diversity, multiculturalism and the achievement gap. Through their participation in this study, the participants also revealed their ideological stances or positionalities related to diversity, diverse students, and diverse school environments. What became evident were the frameworks from which they approach diversity, i.e., conservative, liberal or critical (Jenks et al., 2001; McLaren, 1994; Webster, 1997). The analysis revealed that all of the participants approach diversity primarily from the liberal framework. However, the participants' discourse also revealed elements of the conservative framework. A few of the participants exhibited characteristics of the critical framework, but did not apply approaches that are aligned with this framework, (i.e., transformative and social action approaches (Banks, 1994). Common across the participants' discourse was an avoidance of race. The participants approached the types of oppression from an "equality of oppressions" paradigm (Abrams & Moio, 2009), diluting race among a multitude of other oppressions (i.e. sexism, ageism, classism) and diffusing the centrality of race and racism.

While a few of the participants exhibited characteristics and viewpoints that could be construed as critical, most of the participants did not approach diversity from a critical framework. In their discourse, they did not problematize schooling or articulate an understanding of race, racism, and inequity. The participants' broad definitions of diversity and depictions of diversity solely in a positive light reflected a politically correct stance that is characteristic of the liberal framework. The participants' definitions encompassed a wide array

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of differences (i.e., gender, sexuality, religion, ability, culture, ethnicity, learning styles), including race. These definitions detracted from racism and are reflective of the fragmented way in which the program approached diversity; oppressions were equalized under a "multicultural umbrella" promoting a "color-blind mentality that eclipses the significance of institutionalized racism" (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 245). Throughout the participants' discourse related to diversity and multiculturalism, terms such as respect, appreciation, tolerance and enriching were used frequently. Their definitions can be categorized as rose-colored glasses views of diversity as they focus solely on positive aspects of diversity, do not address power relations and communicate a politically correct or liberal stance on diversity. The participants' broad and general definitions of diversity did not reflect an understanding of the way in which diverse students experience schooling or the structures of schools that hinder their success and promote and preserve whiteness. The participants' definitions of diversity are characteristic of what Yoon (2012) refers to as whiteness strategies, or Whiteness-At-Work, in that they serve as discursive structures that detract from issues of racism (Griffin, 1998) and deracialize the topic of diversity (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004). Throughout the participants' discourse, there was evidence of Whiteness-At-Work. However, it is unclear whether their use of these strategies was conscious and intentional or was subconscious and reflective of the hegemonic ideology characteristic of dysconcious racism.

Towards a Critical Perspective: Adrian, Lori and Ruth

For the most part, the participants' discourse on diversity was reflective of the liberal multicultural framework, which does not address issues of power, privilege, racism or inequity. Adrian, Lori, and Ruth stood out among their peers because their discourse revealed some elements of the critical framework, as the following excerpts will show. However, even though

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the language of these participants reflects more of a critical perspective than the other participants in this study, their perspectives more closely align with the liberal multicultural framework.

Adrian: In his written diversity statement, Adrian refers to multicultural education as a "transformational process" that "must be a process through which all aspects of education are examined, critiqued, and rebuilt on ideals of equity and justice." He states that multicultural education is "an important process for improving education" and that "transformation is needed in pedagogy, assessment, and other aspects of schooling." Adrian views multicultural education as a perspective rather than a curriculum and believes that teachers need to consider children's cultural identities and be aware of their own biases. Although his definition is still broad in scope, his reference to multicultural education being a transformational process indicates an acknowledgement of inequity and injustice and the need for transformation. Adrian's use of the term "transformation" framed around equity and social justice indicates an acknowledgement that the system is not equitable and an awareness of the need for change. However, the fact that Adrian does not mention race or racism indicating a lack of awareness of the underlying causes of inequity. Although Adrian appears to be approaching a critical framework, his discourse reflects more heavily the liberal framework as he does not hold a more critical perspective that places race and racism at the forefront and within a structural/conflict context.

Lori: In her diversity statement, Lori refers to diversity as "a word that is used frequently, but practiced rarely." Her definition of diversity is "the celebration of personal life experiences and backgrounds and it goes beyond affirmative action or token relationships to truly valuing life experiences and backgrounds." Lori believes "diversity influences identity,

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linguistic choices, race, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, and sexual orientation among other things."

Similar to her peers, Lori discusses the term diversity broadly and uses terms that are reflective of the liberal framework (i.e., celebration and valuing difference). However, when she reflects on the experiences of her students, she comes from a more critical stance, which she attributes to her education and training (post-baccalaureate) where she believes she developed a critical lens through which to view the world. In communicating this stance, she addresses concepts such as race, racism, white privilege and whiteness. She appears to recognize her own privilege and the disadvantages of her students. She also expresses a desire to work with and help underserved students to rise above the inequity and work to close the achievement gap.

The fact that Lori is the only participant in this study to acknowledge racism as an issue leads me to conclude that she gained a more critical perspective through her master's degree coursework versus her teacher preparation program. When reflecting on the purpose of schooling, Lori states,

> The articles and stuff from my master's, which were really heavy on…you know institutionalized violence and racism? And how…and I guess I have a hard time. I'm still a little naïve about it because I don't think, well I don't, I don't know, I think some people do intentionally set it up so we are benefitting what they want and meanwhile keeping poor people and making rich people richer basically. I think some of the purpose of schooling from an institution perspective is kinda this is gonna sound awful but like brainwash them into right ways of thinking.

In this excerpt from Lori's interview, she appears aware of inequity and identifies the system as contributing to or maintaining inequity, but she does not make mention of racism. Although she

alludes to whiteness, she does so tentatively and her focus on socioeconomics/poverty as the source of the problem detracts from the centrality of racism. When further clarifying what she meant by "right ways of thinking," Lori states, "I mean like what they want you to think. What white America wants kids to think. What they value. What they think is important, which is more about white people and you know you don't get a ton of."

Lori further alludes to whiteness ideology in the following excerpt:

Race has been created and can be used and redefined by people in power so that they can keep making the decisions they wanna make. Like the whole idea of citizenship and it's just been made up by them. And, it's been made up by white men. Racism is everywhere and experience teaching in diverse and high-need, yeah I just see it everywhere. Um, even people who say they aren't racist and think they're not racist…

When asked what race has to do with schooling, Lori responded,

Well all of it, I mean the whole decision of where people can live, where they can move, how much money they're allowed to make, how much not allowed to make, how much people decide to pay them. I think race factors into that. I think it factors into the foods they have access to. I think it's just everything. I think it's absolutely everything. I think it's um, I just think it's gone back so far too and it's so integrated into our schools. That's a whole big thing to untie. I just, I feel like it affects everything, absolutely everything.

Her references to "it" being integrated into our schools alludes to institutionalized racism and in this excerpt, Lori is clear in her acknowledgement of power relations and inequity, although whiteness remains unnamed in her discourse.

When reflecting on how race-aware she believes we are as a state, Lori states,

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I don't think hardly at all. Nobody wants to admit that schools are racist. You know. Nobody wants to look at it. 'Oh that's not true at all.' The people who make decisions don't want to look at it. I think white people don't want to look at it. I think, yeah, cuz I am sure that people of color I mean they've been looking at it their whole life and living it. So, I'm sure some change would have to come from there.

This section is important because it illustrates how a teacher who has been exposed to an analysis of whiteness, is still prone to assimilating into the culture of the school (whiteness ideology) due to a variety of factors and how teachers can take on a disempowered role that allows them to disassociate with the injustices they are experiencing and even relinquish responsibility. In a state of passive acceptance and defeat, teachers will continue to perpetuate racism and inequity rather than engaging in the reflection and action (praxis) necessary to dismantling whiteness.

Ruth: When reflecting on her understanding of one of the program's core values, multicultural perspectives, Ruth states, "As a Native American, I don't believe that I have to think multicultural. I am multicultural. As I look from the inside out of this multicultural perspective, we as people must respect any person outside of our social, cultural understanding." Although Ruth never clearly defines diversity in her written statements or in her interview, her discourse about diversity reveals a more critical perspective that appears to have evolved from her own experiences as a learner in schools. Ruth's experience as a student in schools influences her approach to teaching versus the program. During her interview, her reflections on diversity focused mainly on her own experiences as a diverse learner in a school where she was the only Navajo student and her family the only Navajo family in the town in which she was raised. As a person of color whose negative experiences in schools included being "marginalized,

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stereotyped, labeled and disregarded" (Ruth's words), Ruth approaches diversity differently from her peers, and takes on a protective role with her students. In reflecting on her experience as a learner, Ruth states, "I had to overcome a lot of diversity and a lot of separation issues from anxiety, the culture, and class." Because of her negative experiences in schools, Ruth voices a strong commitment "not to judge students because of who they are, where they come from, or the clothes they wear." Ruth emphasized that due to these negative experiences she had as a learner in classrooms, it is important to her to treat her students differently from the way in which she perceives she was treated. Although Ruth's own negative experiences are clearly shaping her approach to students and she wants to approach her teaching differently, she does not critique education or schooling as a whole and appears to associate her negative experiences with individuals (teachers) versus structural or systemic factors. She also does not make any mention of racism within her discourse. Rather, Ruth focuses on socioeconomic factors (poverty). Although Ruth exhibits characteristics of a critical framework, she does not name racism specifically and her focus on poverty could be characterized as whiteness-at-work.

Uncritical Stance: Conservative and Liberal Frameworks

Most of the participants did not approach diversity from a critical framework. The participants' definitions of diversity tended to be broad in scope and removed from issues of racism and inequity. Aside from acknowledging that heterogeneous groups of students present challenges for teachers, they approached diversity solely from a positive standpoint, did not problematize schooling, and did not articulate an understanding of how diverse students experience schools that operate on an ideology of whiteness. The following are examples of participants who held uncritical stances that are characteristic of the conservative and liberal frameworks.

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Adrian: Although Adrian's discourse exhibited elements of the critical framework, it is clear that his approach is more aligned with the liberal framework. When discussing strategies for teaching diverse students, Adrian says he strives to integrate multicultural perspectives within the curriculum and foster a climate of understanding, which he believes "encourages appreciation and understanding of other cultures as well as one's own and promotes the student's sense of uniqueness of his/her own culture as positive characteristics and enables the student to accept the uniqueness of the cultures of others." Adrian's use of the terms understanding, appreciation, uniqueness, and acceptance are characteristic of the liberal framework, which does not address "power constructs, control issues, and 'official' knowledge, which stand in the way of achieving equity and excellence" (Jenks et al., 2001, p. 92). Like most of his peers, he has an awareness of what he wants to accomplish in a diverse classroom, but does not appear to be equipped with specific strategies that will support these goals.

Amy: Amy defines multiculturalism as "an attitude of acceptance of differences and celebration of them." She uses the example of children learning about each other's cultures by sharing foods, languages and stories in the classroom setting. In her writings about diversity, Amy states that diversity is "about the world we live in" and that "people have not only different races and cultures, but many religions, no religion, every difference and disability, and every learning style." This broad focus and emphasis on the positive aspects of diversity is similar to the majority of the participants and reflects the "feel-good approach" and the "let's all live together in harmony approach," which is characteristic of the liberal framework. Her statement that, "people have not only races and cultures, but many religions, no religion, every difference and disability, and every learning style" can be construed as Whiteness-At-Work as it forms a

broad and general definition of diversity that diminishes the importance of race and culture by diluting it within a broad spectrum of differences and deracializing the topic of diversity.

In her written discourse, Amy emphasizes the importance of respecting diversity, which to her means "seeing people as individuals, each having their own way of learning." This statement is reflective of the program's focus on learning style differences versus race, ethnic and cultural differences. She believes that as "individuals, we come from backgrounds and cultures which give us solace and influence our attitudes and learning styles and that this should be cause for exploration and celebration." Although Amy acknowledges that the backgrounds and cultures of individuals influence their attitudes and learning and that teachers need to be aware of this and treat students as individuals, the focal point within her discourse is learning style differences.

Amy's stance on diversity and multiculturalism reflects a "rose colored glasses view" that does not reflect a critical understanding of the experiences of diverse students in schools structured to perpetuate inequity. She articulates her view of diversity solely as an asset, enriching the classroom experience and as a cause for celebration, which is reflective of the liberal framework. Her discourse on diversity does not reflect an understanding of the experience of diverse students and how their interests are not served in schools designed for the white and middle class. She, like most of her peers in the program, does not approach diversity and multiculturalism from a critical perspective.

Debbie: In her written statements, Debbie states that her role as a teacher of diverse students is to "help children adapt to our world, which continues to become more diverse." She goes on to assert that "each child is different and adds to the learning environment through their differences, and an educator must value each child to create a safe and inclusive learning

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environment." Debbie acknowledges that because "we live in an increasingly diverse society today, it is important that we learn tolerance and acceptance in order to function and succeed in our everyday lives." She believes that "each person has value and every person also has strengths that we can all benefit and learn from." As with her peers, her general awareness of how she needs to approach her work with diverse students does not go beyond the conceptual. She knows what her vision is, which is to create a safe and inclusive learning environment. However, an understanding of how to achieve this operationally is absent. Additionally, she frames diversity solely in a positive light, reflective of the "feel good' approach of the liberal multicultural framework, negating the experience of diverse students in schools and the inequity that they experience that limits their potential and opportunity. Her posturing and her assertions are reflective of the liberal framework where she values multicultural pluralism (the tossed salad—everyone has something to contribute and we can all learn from each other) and the goal is "let's get to know each other better."

Debbie's discourse reveals that she does not approach the topic of diversity from a critical framework, but perceives diversity as a positive phenomenon from which she and others can benefit, and something that students must "adapt" to. Her use of the terms "adapt" and "function" are reflective of the conservative framework, which focuses on assimilation or adaptation to the dominant/mainstream culture. Approaching diversity from the ideology of assimilation, Debbie believes that the diverse individual (student) must change in order to function or be successful in school and beyond, without problematizing aspects of the school that may need to be transformed in order to ensure that the interests of children of color are served. She uses the typical terminology reflective of the liberal framework (tolerance, acceptance, understanding, celebrate, respect, inclusion, and learning from each other), does not discuss

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diversity in terms of race, racism, and inequity and does not problematize education and schooling from these angles.

      Barbara: Barbara's description of the classroom environment she strives to build is one that is safe and where students feel respected, appreciated, and heard. This aligns with the liberal framework, which focuses on a "'feel-good' approach in which diversity is achieved through a humanistic agenda that promotes tolerance and acceptance but pays little attention to the dominant culture in preventing equality and excellence for all" (Jenks et al., 2001, p. 92). In conflict with her vision of a classroom environment, her management philosophy (as described by Barbara in her interview) entails strong routines, clear expectations, regular rewards, and consistent consequences. The descriptors she used to describe her classroom environment allude to a more behavioristic approach that is characteristic of a traditional, authoritarian and rigid approach (i.e. strong routines and behavioristic techniques). In direct contrast to liberating and empowering pedagogy, the behavioristic approach does not support the sharing of power with students that allows for student voice and opportunities to make choices about their learning. Many of the participants alluded to the rigid and authoritarian environments of diverse and high-need/low-performing schools where in many cases general respect for students was absent. This approach appears to be the norm in all of the school environments of the participants in this study. Barbara does not exhibit self-awareness as she does not appear to be cognizant of the disconnect between her vision of a classroom environment and her classroom management philosophy.

      When asked to reflect on whether teachers need to acquire specialized skills or approaches in order to be successful with diverse students, Barbara steered away from speaking only about diverse students and focused more on the importance of including <u>all</u> children's

experiences and prior knowledge during the school day to make academic skills and material more relevant. Following is an excerpt from her diversity statement (application to the program), where Barbara communicates her view of educational attainment as far as her role as a teacher and the role of student and family.

> To get a good education you have to want it. You won't always enjoy it so you have to have the fundamental interest in learning, a reason for it. For most young children there is joy in learning and mastery, and this is reason enough. But if a student experiences some barrier to learning or their upbringing has not made it clear why it is important to go to school and succeed, it helps if it is fun…some families have difficulty providing the environment which best supports academic achievement for their children. To fulfill the promise of education as the true meritocracy, I believe it is the teacher's job to do three things: make school relevant, make it fun, and partner with parents. It is important to value and include all children's experiences and knowledge during the school day in order to make academic skills and material relevant.

The above statement is reveals Barbara's underlying ideology. Although in her interview, Barbara acknowledges inequity in education and schools, her discourse reflects a belief in individualism and meritocracy and makes sense of inequity through a cultural deficit lens. In the first part of her statement, Barbara communicates her belief that it is up to the individual and ties barriers to learning and achievement solely to the home environment and family values, without problematizing the institution of schooling. In the second part of her statement, Barbara communicates what she believes teachers need to do in order for schools to serve as a true meritocracy. The solutions she names are broad and general and do not address race. Barbara does not use the word diverse when referring to students and made general

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statements about good teaching practices for all students. Her overall response reflects more of a conservative framework operating from the belief that good teaching is good teaching irrespective of who is being taught and that racial and cultural differences do not play a significant role in academic opportunity and achievement. It is difficult to discern whether Barbara views diversity as a non-issue, reflective of the colorblind ideology, or whether she exhibits Whiteness-At-Work as a strategy to deliberately detract from issues of race. Regardless, Barbara approaches diversity from a success for all perspective that negates the need for a specialized skill set for teachers of diverse students in schools that operate in ways that counter their success. This uncritical stance may prevent her from engaging in transformation. Although accessing students' prior knowledge is a teaching strategy for diverse students, Barbara does not problematize schools as designed for the dominant class whose children enter school with similar prior knowledge sets and experiences. She does not articulate an understanding of why accessing students' prior knowledge is especially important to children of color or that as traditionally underserved students, they, more so than their white peers, need to experience schooling in more culturally relevant and connected ways.

Randy: In his diversity statement, Randy refers to America as a "melting pot of different immigrants that have come here over the centuries." Randy's use of the metaphor of the "melting pot" is reflective of the conservative framework, which promotes cultural homogeneity through the assimilation of diverse cultures into the dominant or mainstream culture. However, his supporting discourse is reflective of the liberal framework as he focuses on diversity as something enriching that all can benefit and learn from. He believes diversity offers the opportunity to learn much from other people and says that he has always supported people's

diversity and welcomed differences they may have. The following is an excerpt from Randy's diversity statement where he defines diversity,

Diversity is not only in the student's cultural background, but can be seen in the various ways that they learn. These differences are important to consider when one is pursuing a career in teaching because all styles of teaching must be utilized. Every student learns differently and it is up to the teacher to give various perspectives on subject matter.

Randy's statement that "diversity is not only about cultural background" followed by language that places emphasis on learning style differences reflects whiteness strategies or Whiteness-At-Work (Yoon, 2012) that serves as discursive detraction from issues of racism (Griffin, 1998) deracialize the topic of diversity (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004), and diminish the importance of race. In this case, Randy only mentions culture and then proceeds to focus on learning styles when talking about diversity.

During his interview, Randy reflected on how his beliefs about diversity have evolved from when he first started the program. His statement provides insights into how diversity was addressed by the program. Randy states,

When I started the program, I believed that diversity simply meant that you will have a mix of different ethnicities in your classroom. Now I understand that diversity is not just culturally based. The diversities that exist in your classroom are numerous. For example, there are different types of learners, differences between 8th grade boys and girls, language differences, and much more. To be a good teacher one must adapt to all the diversities and differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of their students. As I reflect on the core value of diversity, I am surprised on how much the definition of the term has grown. I now try to teach my students with all their diversities in mind.

Randy is clear in this excerpt about what he feels he gained from the program in terms of his perspective of and understanding of diversity. The message was, "it's not just about culture." Randy does not address diversity from a racial and cultural standpoint, nor does he address issues of racism and inequality. Instead, he focuses on learning style differences and ability levels and views differentiated instruction as a primary tool for addressing students with diverse learning styles. His perspective is reflective of the program's liberal framework that minimized the importance of race in favor of more politically correct aspects of diversity that do not cause discomfort and do not disrupt or expose whiteness.

In describing the difference between the program's core values of diversity and multicultural perspectives, Randy states,

> Now I believe that diversity is what you will see in your classroom, and a multicultural perspective is what the students bring to the classroom. For example, the parents of my students are mainly Hispanic and Mexican. They bring a very precise multicultural perspective into my classroom. These families value religion, family, and community. Education is important, but not pinnacle as in my culture. Their perspective is different and any good teacher needs to understand these differences to better teach this population. When I apply a multicultural perspective to my classroom, I understand where my students come from and what they value.

Randy's discourse reveals his general awareness of what he wants to be able to achieve as a teacher of diverse students. He wants to understand where his students come from (background and culture) and what their values are, and to use this awareness to inform his teaching. However, he does not articulate how he will use this awareness to change his practices. Randy's positioning reflects the liberal framework in that he speaks in terms of welcoming and

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appreciating diversity, but does not problematize the concept of diversity. Randy also

approaches diversity from a conservative framework when he speaks with great authority and

certainty in reference to the very precise perspective of his students and their families, where the

value of education is not pinnacle as in his own family. He later refers to this order of values of

Hispanic families as contributing to the achievement gap. In making sense of the achievement

gap, Randy's approach is reflective of the deficit ideology, also characteristic of the conservative

framework. In making a generalized statement about what he, with great certainty, views as the

order of values of Hispanic families (different from his own), he refers to these value differences

as deficits or drawbacks that contribute to the achievement gap. As a white male, Randy

attributes his own success to his own cultural values—where education comes first. Randy

approaches diversity and diverse people from a position of paternalistic authority. Although he

speaks of diversity as an opportunity to learn from others, he focuses more on how he can

"enlighten" (Randy's words) others through his own diversity. In his diversity essay, Randy

states,

> I am originally from New York and moved to New Mexico a year ago. This puts me in a
>
> great situation to enhance the diversity of those around me. I also have many personal
>
> and professional experiences that I can share with other people to give them different
>
> outlooks on their lives. One of my passions is to enlighten those around me and learn
>
> more about myself. I am excited about a teaching career in New Mexico due its diverse
>
> culture and people. I can only add to this diversity and enhance ones perspective on the
>
> world with my own knowledge. It will be a great place to learn about others and myself.

Another characteristic of the conservative framework is the stance that culture is a non-

issue. It is evident that Randy also approaches diversity from a conservative framework in that

he minimized the importance of race and culture to focus on learning styles. For example, in reflecting on what he learned through the program about diversity, Randy states,

> Diversity is not only in the student's cultural background, but can be seen in their various ways that they learn. These differences are important to consider…because all styles of teaching must be utilized. Every student learns differently and it is up to the teacher to give various perspectives on subject matter.

Ruth: Due to her own experiences as a minority in schools, Ruth exhibits a more critical perspective of diversity than most of her peers, she still approaches diversity from a liberal framework. In further reflecting on how the program prepared her to teach diverse students, Ruth states that through the program, she has "grown to welcome diversity by respecting people for who they are. Everyone is valuable and to understand people and where they are intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually helps us to understand a sense of appreciation for them and the human race." From a liberal framework she exhibits a great deal of compassion for and understanding of her students' experiences and understands the need to honor students' backgrounds and family life and to bring these into the classroom in terms of meeting classroom goals. It is questionable whether Ruth will integrate students' experiences in meaningful and substantive ways because she did not articulate how she would achieve this operationally in her classroom.

In her written statement, Ruth identifies two main goals she would like to achieve as a teacher of diverse students: 1) being a positive role model, and 2) doing her part to "help create an environment conducive to learning that acknowledges and respects different perspectives." She expresses her desire for all students to be successful, "irrespective of their ethnic or language background, or other differences." Aligned with the conservative framework she speaks in terms

of success for all students and she operates from the notion of diversity as a non-issue, which is characteristic of the conservative framework. The terms she uses to describe her classroom environment (i.e., acknowledge and respect for difference) are characteristic of the liberal framework focusing on fostering acceptance, tolerance, appreciation, and respect for difference. The fact that she did not problematize schooling in terms of policies, structures, and practices in making sense of diversity indicates that she views schools from a functionalist perspective structured in the best interests of all, whereby students excel based on motivation and hard work.

Shelly: Shelly defines diversity as "celebrating the uniqueness of everyone; students, staff, and the greater school community." She refers to multiculturalism as the "family structures, economic status, religious beliefs, and the values of people." As a classroom teacher, she says she encourages students in her classroom to "respect one another and to share their cultural experiences to improve learning." She pinpoints project-based learning as a way to provide rich learning experiences for her students, but she does not speak in specific operational terms about how she will use students' cultural experience to improve learning. Shelly's definition of diversity and multiculturalism and her reflections on how she will address diversity in her classroom reflect the liberal framework. When reflecting on diversity in New Mexico versus growing up in the Midwest, Shelly states,

> The diversity is different here than it is…you know when I was growing up? I think I'm a lot more…tolerant isn't the right word…I mean probably, but maybe it is. Just understanding of or accepting of different cultures, different beliefs, different ideas and how those things all kind of weave together to make you know one experience.

In this excerpt, Shelly reveals that she is uncomfortable talking about diversity. Her statements are made with caution and she is hesitant. In alignment with her peers in this study, Shelly

speaks of diversity in esoteric terms. Her use of language, (i.e., tolerance, understanding, and acceptance align with the liberal framework. Her metaphor of the weaving together of different cultures, beliefs, and ideas mirrors the liberal framework metaphor of the "tossed salad," to depict cultural pluralism, where individuals maintain their cultures and identities, but are united through the shared, mainstream, dominant culture.

> **Susan:** In her written statements, Susan reflects on the importance of diversity,
>
> Diversity in all its tangible and intangible forms is necessary for healthy human interaction, improved critical thinking skills and an enhanced quality of life…Diversity in the human environment is just as important as diversity in a natural environment. It's healthy. It brings new ideas. It helps people problem solve. It helps people be kind you know and the earlier students are exposed to that the better, I think the easier life is gonna be for them.

 Susan depicts diversity in all positive terms and her statements even sound poetic. In alignment with the liberal framework she uses positive and politically correct terminology, depicting diversity as an asset and an opportunity, without addressing power relations and structural inequalities. She expresses her belief that educational institutions have "both an opportunity and responsibility to promote an understanding of, and respect for, diversity in an increasingly global environment." She does not approach diversity from a critical framework as she does not problematize schooling and her broad and general definition of diversity detracts from issues of race, racism and inequity (Whiteness-At-Work). This can be problematic as it may inhibit her ability to teach towards the equity and excellence of diverse students.

> **Tammy:** When asked to share her philosophy of education, Tammy says that she

believes, "experiential learning is important for students to connect with their own realities," and

that "students don't really learn from just textbooks." When identifying strategies for teaching diverse students, Tammy focuses on learning style differences omitting racial and cultural diversity. She states that it is important to "apply different learning strategies to engage students, use more individualized assessments that focus on progress, and address the fact that socioeconomic status plays an important part in a child's learning." In her reflections on her approach to teaching diverse students, Tammy does not mention race or culture. Aligned with the conservative framework, Tammy communicates the view that good teaching is good teaching irrespective of who is being taught. The fact that she did not address diversity and how it may impact teaching and learning and the academic success of her students indicates that she, like other conservative multiculturalists views diversity as a non-issue. Tammy emphasizes socioeconomic status as playing an important role in student learning but does not acknowledge the important role race plays. Her statements align with that of her peers and are reflective of the program's broad definition and coverage of the topic of diversity that detracts from issues of race and racism. This can be categorized as Whiteness-At Work.

It is clear from the participants' discourse that the program approached diversity from the perspective of functionalism within a range of the conservative and liberal frameworks. Within the program, there was a clear focus on cultivating respect, appreciation and tolerance for diversity, resting on the assumption that schools are structured in the best interests of society, with balance maintained through a system in which students advance and are awarded based on merit; a telltale sign of the functionalist perspective reflective of the program's framework and approach to diversity. The participants have taken on a politically correct or liberal stance on diversity. It is difficult to ascertain whether the participants have embraced this view subconsciously due to a lack of critical consciousness, or if the participants have consciously

formed this view as an intentional form of resistance and self/group preservation. The

Whiteness-At-Work strategies that arose could be subconscious and something that they learned

through the program or they could be conscious and intentional. It is likely that they consciously

engage in race avoidance because they fear appearing racist or they are avoiding the conflict and

discomfort that comes from talking about race. It is also possible that teachers embrace this

politically correct/ rose-colored glasses view as a safe way to approach diversity and perhaps a

way for teachers to cope with their realities, which involve difficult and sometimes heart

wrenching situations and circumstances. Regardless, this perspective can inhibit their ability to

teach in equitable ways that counter racism. The rose-colored glasses view combined with the

racial/cultural mismatch between teachers may serve to fuel dysconscious racism and keep

teachers from acting in the best interests of diverse students.

Desensitization: Lori

Teachers who approach diversity from the liberal framework may also be more prone to

assimilating into and even to becoming desensitized to the culture of diverse high-need and low-

performing schools. The participants' descriptions of their school cultures and environments

were very similar. They used descriptors like punitive, restrictive, rigid and authoritarian. Lori

entered the classroom with ideals of social justice and an awareness of whiteness, white

privilege, and racism, gained not from her teacher preparation experience, but through her post-

baccalaureate coursework. However, early on in her first year of teaching, she became less

optimistic about her ability to teach towards social justice and equity. She admits to changing

her instructional style to incorporate the strict and rigid approach common to her school and the

schools of her peers in this study, and having accepted this general approach as the "correct" way

to teach diverse students in high-need and low-performing schools. In the following excerpt

from Lori's interview, she reflects on how her ideals have shifted from when she first entered the classroom.

> My ideas of why I wanna teach are different and when I came in I kind of thought I was gonna like really impact the world and I had those kind of ideas, which I still hope to do but I think I'm a little less optimistic about that…I wanted to do social justice issues and all those things and I feel like more now as a teacher I have to sneak it in as opposed to that's my whole foundation as a teacher. So it's shifted.

When asked if she believes that children of color receive a lesser quality of education, Lori states,

"I definitely do. For the fact of like we didn't get teaching materials. I know this wouldn't happen at a school in the heights…you know the good areas… Yeah, I don't think they are. I really don't." In further reflecting on inequity in schools, Lori states,

> I definitely feel like maybe what I was saying is how I feel like it's [school] designed to make some people wealthier and some people stay poor. And I definitely think that is the case. I think that is the case with how many materials are distributed, how much money is spent. I know New Mexico says they have some ratio [of funding]…right so you work at the south valley and you know that's not true. You know it plays out different. One of my kids had a roach in their meal the other day. Like I don't think that would happen in all schools. You know and it's just things like that you know and to be honest it's like okay well switch out the food. Like what else can we do? We've already had the cafeteria closed down for roaches. It's like you know that would not happen where I grew up—the school I went to. We had a huge flooding thing and they tried to put the kids back in but there was mold you know? Just all these like basic health stuff.

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Lori acknowledges power relations and structural inequity but does not name whiteness or speak in terms of race. Lori also spoke about the initial shock at the conditions she experienced when she first started teaching in a high-need school and how this initial shock has faded over time. She states,

> That was my first real I think exposure to kids living in poverty and I just cried. Like, I just cried and cried and cried and I felt guilty about how I was brought up…Maybe a year, a year and a half like to where I was just like crying and just not sure what do do…it's gotten easier definitely…the shock has worn off and I think I see my role as able to detach a bit…it's not that I care less it's just that I think I don't take it personally. I'm not in the attitude of trying to fix it.

This excerpt from Lori's interview illustrates how she was initially disturbed by the conditions that her students were experiencing, and even felt guilty about her own privilege. However, in time, she was able to accept the conditions of her students as a natural consequence of the environment in which she teaches, buying into the functionalist perspective. It appears she is influenced by her colleagues and that this influence has contributed to both her acceptance of the injustice and the shift in her practices from democratic to authoritarian-style teaching that is both strict and harsh (Lori's words). The following excerpt shows the influence that Lori's mentor has had in terms of how she makes sense of and approaches diversity and the achievement gap.

Me: *What's your philosophy behind classroom management and the approaches you choose to employ in your classroom?*

Lori: *It is very recently shifting. I just recently videotaped myself and I realized I am like way to strict. So, I've been reflecting on that a lot. Um, and I used to be harsh and very um, preemptive about things like you know my expectations.*

Me: *So, I'm wondering if you maybe learned some of that from your colleagues?*

Lori: *Totally. I totally did. And I actually worried that I was being too influenced in getting away from my spirit and what I think, um, by my team teacher…I actually was almost not gonna work with her cuz she had a reputation for yelling at the kids and I was like I am not a yeller. I don't yell at my kids and…but we got paired up. She is [now] my biggest supporter. I trust her unconditionally and when she yells at the kids it's… they're out of line. They're out of control. They're disrespectful. But definitely the way we deal with kids…we influence each other.*

Having let go of ideals of working to change these conditions and circumstances, Lori has positioned herself in a disempowered role versus a role of advocate and cultural worker. Lori's detachment and disempowered positioning may hinder her from working to transform schooling for her students. This disempowered stance allows her to abdicate responsibility for the injustices she witnesses on a daily basis.

When reflecting on why she thinks the unjust conditions of her school are tolerated by the teachers, Lori attributes the lack of action to a passive acceptance and a sense of being disempowered. She states,

If you go apply at these schools this is what you're quote…you know…"what you're signing up for." So, it's kind of already a passive acceptance of like this is how it is. I think it's for the people who care a frustration of feeling stuck with what can actually I do? And a lot of times I just keep coming back to I can deal with this little chunk of time I have with my kids cuz I get very overwhelmed. The status quo. I think it's people saying, 'well, yeah, that's how it is over here.' That's how it is there it's like this acceptance of well that's how it is. And probably people disagree with it and they don't like it but as far as the change that would have to take place would be huge. It would be,

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it would be complete turn it inside out, upside down. And the wealthy families are, you

know the white wealthy families would be pissed and livid and hire lawyers and probably

even just that fear of that sort of recourse is enough to keep people in their little tracks.

This excerpt also reflects Lori's awareness of blind acceptance, desensitization, disempowerment

and possibly resistance that can prevent teachers from acknowledging that there is a system of

privilege that is maintained by hegemonic structures and ideology and how their disempowered

positioning can deter them from advocating for change or allows them to relinquish

responsibility for inequity. She also exhibits awareness that there is a resistance that stems from

the dominant class' desire to preserve their own wealth, privilege, and superiority that teachers

would have to face in their role as advocates for change and the general sense that this is just not

something that an everyday teacher would sign up for given the negative repercussions they

could experience as a result.

When asked what the teachers' role is in working to change these conditions, Lori

acknowledges the importance of the teachers' role and reflects on her role and action/inaction.

She states,

Right! Right! I think that's super important cuz I think a lot of times we're maybe the

ones who see it regularly and certainly for the school environment. Like personally, I

don't really know the channels. You know I ask, we don't have soap or paper towels so it

was like a month and a half and I was like I just, I want paper towels and I want soap for

my room. Like, I want my kids to be able to wash their hands. So you just, I just feel

kind of stuck. Like you know I want my kids to do their homework. I want them to have

a good environment and as far as priorities you know for me, myself like calling who

ever I need to call to figure out who I need to call. I don't do that. I really don't.

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When asked if teachers talk about or deal with the issues, Lori replied, "We do. It's more like just oh what a shame. That's [district] you know it's more of an attitude of like eh, it is what it is…we don't talk about the politics of what we are doing." Her response illustrates the passive acceptance of the teachers she referred to earlier in her interview as the general attitude that is held by the teachers towards the conditions of the school and the negative experiences of the students. Although the teachers acknowledge that inequities exist and that there are certainly injustices that their students are faced with, but they do not acknowledge their role in these injustices (inaction versus action and advocacy). Lori exhibits recognition of the underlying sociopolitical factors but communicates that teachers do not engage in discussion about these factors, indicating the lack of political and ideological clarity (Bartolome, 2008; Bartolome & Balderrama, 2001) of the program and the participants as products of the program.

> When reflecting on how the kids might be impacted by these conditions, Lori replied,
> So you know and honestly a lot of the kids the things they share it's not a huge deal to
> them. They're not, they're not worried about it…I mean the kid with the roach tray took
> the next tray and kept eating. Like I wouldn't be able to…I can't eat from our cafeteria
> again you know but that…so, you know maybe it's different…

This particular statement is very telling in that she communicates her belief that it is somehow different for *these* children, that they experience things differently than she and that the conditions they are exposed to somehow may not impact the students in the same way that *someone like her* would be impacted. The way in which she has elected to make sense of the conditions of her students is to position them as different from her rather than to attack the root issue (that the conditions her students are experiencing are fundamentally unjust and that students may in fact be hurt by these experiences). When teachers choose to detach from the

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injustices and refrain from action, they position themselves and their students as objects versus subjects. The message that students then receive is that they should deny and repress their experiences as their teachers are doing.

These excerpts from Lori's interview capture the progression of Lori's assimilation into the school culture and ideology and her disassociation from the unjust experiences of her students. They also illustrate how a teacher who enters the classroom with ideals of social justice and an understanding of racism, whiteness and inequity, in time can assimilate into the school's culture and ways of rationalizing inequity. Moreover, it illustrates how they can become desensitized to and passively accept the negative conditions their students are exposed to as part of their everyday experience as learners in schools. The disempowered self-positioning allows them to abdicate responsibility for injustice and can be categorized as whiteness-at-work. I don't believe that they have a deep understanding of racism and therefore are not necessarily intentional or conscious of their role in detracting from racism and in turn perpetuating it. I believe that they have been conditioned to accept the ideology of whiteness and because they have not engaged in a critique of whiteness they continue to perpetuate it in their practices and in how they make sense of their school cultures and environments. Furthermore, they may be disassociating themselves from the injustices their students are experiencing because it helps them cope in a troubling and unsettling environment. They are struggling to make sense of the inequity and injustice and have not developed the race consciousness that would expose whiteness and therefore allow them to form a more critical interpretation of what they are experiencing as teachers in diverse, high-need and low-performing schools. It is also possible that they fear challenging what's going on, even though they know it is wrong. Thus they must

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repress their acknowledgement of these injustices and distance themselves from them as a means of coping.

Critical Reflection

Critical reflection is essential to the process of developing culturally relevant pedagogy as an effective means of meeting the needs of diverse students (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade et al., 1997). Teacher education programs should apply critical reflection as a way to integrate issues of equity and social justice into teacher thinking and practice (Howard, 2003) and as an essential foundation for the development of culturally relevant pedagogy. At minimum, effective teachers of diverse students need to achieve cultural competence and be able to apply the basics of culturally relevant pedagogy to ensure more equitable teaching. However, cultural competence and culturally relevant pedagogy are not sufficient to dismantle the hegemonic structures and ideology that are part of the fabric of American education. Ideally, teachers should engage in deep critical reflection that incites awareness of deeper importance of culturally relevant practices and as such, teach with intention. When teachers apply their practices with purpose and with the intention of dismantling racism and oppression, their practices become transformative and counter-hegemonic. Transformative and counter-hegemonic teaching requires that teachers achieve much more than cultural competence.

The term "competence" may be defined as a state or quality of being adequately or well qualified or possessing requisite or adequate knowledge or skills in a particular area. In education these competencies are often categorized into learning outcomes involving knowledge, skills, and attitudes that allow for educational approaches which address each of these areas. Consequently, "cultural competency" is frequently approached in ways

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which limit its goals to knowledge of characteristics, cultural beliefs, and practices of

different nonmajority groups, and skills and attitudes of empathy and compassion in

interviewing and communicating with nonmajority groups. Achieving cultural

competence is thus often viewed as a static outcome. (Kumagi & Lypson, 2009, p. 783)

The effective teaching of diverse students cannot be viewed within a simplistic

framework of competency as it is not a static outcome to be achieved. Instead, teachers should

come to view their practice as an ongoing counter-hegemonic response to the racism diverse

students encounter every day that undermines their success not only in schools but in society.

Beyond competence, their pedagogy must be consciously structured and enacted to counter

hegemony. In this sense, they are applying their pedagogy with intention. They are critically

conscious of racism in society that maintains the hierarchal structures that inhibit the

advancement of people of color within these structures. Further, they embrace their roles as

change agents combating racism through their teaching practices and praxis (reflective action).

Beyond culturally relevant or culturally competent teaching, they are engaging in praxis that is

counter-hegemonic.

To surpass competence, teachers must develop critical consciousness as a strategic state

of mind that drives their praxis. To achieve critical consciousness one must be race-conscious,

which is not quickly or easily achieved. Race consciousness is achieved through development of

positive identity (Tatum, 2001), which is a "lifelong process that often requires unlearning

misinformation and stereotypes that have internalized not only about others, but also about

ourselves" (Tatum, 2001, p. 53). The type of critical reflection that supports the development of

critical consciousness requires reflection on the race and culture of teachers, students, families

and the communities served. It also requires that one go beyond reflections of self and practice

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to develop an understanding of one's own biases, assumptions, stereotypes and values, and how these impact how one approaches others and the world, while acknowledging the racism, inequity and injustice that exists in schools and society. In addition, teachers must be acutely aware of their own power and privilege in relation to the powerlessness and lack of privilege experienced by their students of color and their families. At a deep level, critical reflection as an essential pathway or process to the development of critical consciousness involves the unlearning of racism.

Based on the analysis of the interview and focus group transcripts and the participants' diversity statements, this section will describe the program's approach to as well as the participants understanding of critical reflection. The analysis revealed that the program did not promote the type of critical reflection that is essential to the development of critical consciousness and race awareness. The participants have some sense of what types of strategies to use with diverse students to support their success, but do not use specific terms to describe their methodology or strategies (i.e., culturally relevant pedagogy). Because they have not engaged in the type of critical reflection that supports the development of critical consciousness, the participants may apply elements of culturally relevant teaching, but will not teach with counter-hegemonic intention. As such, their practices will not be transformative in terms of combatting the racism that is so deeply embedded in our educational system and continues to undermine the success of people of color.

Reflection Toward Critical Consciousness vs. Competence

As stated in the previous section, critical reflection that incites critical consciousness is essential to the development of culturally relevant pedagogy that is transformative and counter-

hegemonic. One of the program's core values is critical reflection, defined in the student guide as the belief that,

> We as educators must be critically reflective practitioners. We model and teach critically reflective practice through knowledge and skills that will enable our students to address the following questions: 1) Who am I as an educator? 2) Why do I do what I do? And 3) How do I engage in continuous improvement. (Handbook, 2011)

The program defines critical reflection in terms of reflective practice, where the focus is on teacher knowledge, skills and continuous improvement upon instruction versus a way to achieve critical consciousness. Reflective practice differs from critical reflection in that "critical reflection involves social and political analyses, which enables transformative changes, whereas reflection may remain at the level of relatively undisruptive changes of techniques or superficial thinking" (Fook et al., 2006, p. 9). The analysis revealed that in alignment with the way in which the program defines critical reflection, the participants hold a deracialized view of critically reflective practice. The following are examples of the participants' definitions of critical reflection from their end of program core values reflection papers.

> I have learned that being critically reflective helps a teacher learn from successes and mistakes from the previous years. It is also a place where one can reflect on their own teaching styles, classroom management techniques, and classroom environment (Randy).

> Critically reflective practice is the ability to honestly and thoughtfully analyze one's intentions, experiences and actions, and change those actions if necessary. It is the ability to reflect on personal and professional experiences and beliefs, and examine how they influence interactions with students, co-workers, parents, and community members (Susan).

Critically reflective practice can be accomplished when an educator examines their teaching through the eyes of their experience as a learner, reflecting on their practice, collaborating with colleagues, and researching their craft (Shelly).

This [critical reflective practice] refers to the fact that we as teachers are always learning, always investigating, always seeking to improve our own practice (Jason).

Reflective practice has allowed me to consider the following questions: Which teaching model am I using and how does it apply in specific teaching situations? My classroom becomes a type of subtle laboratory where I can relate teaching theory to teaching practice. This theory provides a unifying rationale for the activities that are implemented in the classroom; classroom observation and reflection enable me to refine the theory and adjust my teaching practices. Concepts that I have acquired through reading, classroom assignments and professional development are absorbed and tested in the reflective practice cycle (Adrian).

Critically reflective practice means never being satisfied and never being complacent. It means evaluating whether you would be proud to have your own child spend 6.5 hours a day in your class. Our classrooms are vessels of the American dream and absolutely no less. It is a grave and awesome responsibility and one that requires that we constantly adapt and improve. Schools are increasingly structuring time for teachers to work together in meaningful ways as a part of their critically reflective practice, and I intend to make use of my peers as much as possible (Barbara).

I define this value as the application of my personal philosophy as an educator that I will always abide in my classroom (Tammy).

A critically reflective practitioner reflects on his/her own identity as an educator and analysis how this influences teaching practices and interactions with students, parents, communities. He/she reflect on, analyze, and evaluate the effect of his/her choices on others, including students, colleagues, parents, and communities, and use this knowledge to engage in continuous improvement of his/her practice (Ruth).

Critically reflective practice is a part of "know thyself"-- the need to self-evaluate your motives, life and practice constantly. For me during the program, it is about being a little more humble. It's one thing to think up a "great idea" at home, but sometimes it doesn't work in the classroom, or needs to be altered. Self-evaluation can be achieved by reflection, good listening skills, and by measuring results (Amy).

Critically reflective practice is an ongoing process of evaluating and re-evaluating your teaching practices. The use of tools such as field notes, teacher inquiry, and journaling to track what works and what did not (Theresa).

[The program] has taught me the importance of being a critically reflective instructor who is continuously thoughtful on my own personal identity as an educator and has taught me how my constant analysis influences teaching practices and interactions with students, parents, and communities (Debbie).

The participants' definitions of critically reflective practice do not address power relations, structural inequity, race, racism or whiteness. They approach critical reflection solely from a technical aspect, whereby the goal is to improve teaching practices versus achieving critical consciousness. It is clear that in addressing the concepts of diversity and multiculturalism, the program did not engage the participants in social and political analyses. As such, critical reflection is disconnected from

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diversity/multiculturalism and social justice. This disconnect can lead to a focus on diversity and multiculturalism while completely ignoring issues of social justice (Gregg & Saha, 2006).

> The development of critical consciousness involves a reflective awareness of the differences in power and privilege and the inequities that are embedded in social relationships—an act that Freire calls 'reading the world"—and the fostering of reorientation of perspective towards a commitment to social justice. The development of this type of consciousness—a process that Freire calls 'conscientization'—is both cognitive and affective and leads to engaged discourse, collaborative problem-solving, and a 'rehumanization' of human relationships. (Kumagi & Lypson, 2009, p. 783)

However, it does not end with critical reflection as it is inextricably linked to reflective action. The transformation of schooling for people of color occurs through praxis (Freire, 1993) or reflection and action based on an authentic commitment to equity and social justice and a respect for all humankind. One must be able to apply one's critical consciousness to act in ways that negate social injustices. This action or acts of transformation must be informed by critical consciousness. Praxis captures the social roles and responsibilities of teachers working with diverse students in complex social contexts. Teachers who are critically conscious are purposeful in their application of culturally relevant teaching in that there is clear intent of negating racism and social injustices.

To achieve true praxis leading to equity and social justice for diverse students, teacher education programs must be structured so that pre-service teachers encounter reflective (Habermas, 1976) or transformative learning (Meizrow, 1990) and be able to achieve this type of learning in their own classrooms. As such, teacher education programs must ensure that pre-service teachers enter the classroom critically conscious, achieved through the critical reflection

that challenges socio-cultural distortions, including taken for granted belief systems that "pertain to power and social relationships, especially those currently prevailing and legitimized and enforced by institutions" (Meizrow, 1990, p. 15). This type of learning differs from non-reflective learning that "takes place in action contexts in which implicitly raised theoretical and practical validity claims are naively taken for granted and accepted or rejected without discursive consideration" (Habermas, 1976, p. 16).

The program's definition of critical reflection and the manner in which it was addressed within the program disconnects it from social, political, moral, and ethical contexts and detracts from issues of equity, access, and social justice. As a result, the participants did not examine race, racism, and whiteness and are unaware of and therefore unable to identify and counter their own deficit-based thinking (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Howard (2003) identifies three areas of critical reflection that are essential components toward the development of culturally relevant pedagogy,

> First, teachers must acknowledge how deficit-based notions of diverse students continue to permeate traditional school thinking, practices, and placement, and critique their own thoughts and practices to ensure they do not reinforce prejudice behavior. Second, culturally relevant pedagogy recognizes the explicit connection between culture and learning, and sees students' cultural capital as an asset and not a detriment to their school success. Third, culturally relevant teaching is mindful of how traditional teaching practices reflect middle-class, European American cultural values, and thus seeks to incorporate a wider range of dynamic and fluid teaching practices. (Howard, 2003, p. 198)

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The participants did not exhibit an awareness of deficit-based thinking in schools and most

exhibited deficit-based thinking themselves. They did not communicate an understanding of the

important connection between culture and learning and differences in values and family

dynamics were viewed as deficits acting as barriers to the success of diverse students. Only one

of the participants acknowledged that schools are structured upon an ideology of whiteness that

makes it difficult for children of color to be successful in schools. Further, few of them

communicated critical reflection in terms of deep and honest self-reflection, identification and

deconstruction of biases, assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices, and critique of how one's

thoughts influences one's teaching behaviors and in turn impact students.

 The participants' view of critical reflection is aligned more with reflective practice where

the aim is to reflect on practices for the purposes of continuous improvement. This is

problematic because when critical reflection is deracialized and disconnected from issues of

equity and social justice teachers are unable to develop the critical pedagogy necessary for

equitable teaching.

> Self-reflection and cultural critical consciousness are imperative to improving the
>
> educational opportunities and outcomes for students of color. They involve
>
> thoroughly analyzing and carefully monitoring both personal beliefs and
>
> instructional behaviors about the value of cultural diversity, and the best ways to
>
> teach ethnically different students for maximum positive effects. Corresponding
>
> behaviors have to be changed to incorporate more positive knowledge and
>
> perceptions of cultural diversity. To engage in these continuous critiques and
>
> efforts to make teaching more relevant to diverse students, teachers need to have a
>
> thorough understanding of their own cultures and the cultures of different ethnic

groups, as well as how this affects teaching and learning behaviors. (Gay, 2003, p. 182)

Although all the participants voice a commitment to the success of all students and a sense of preparedness for working in high-need and low-performing schools, because they did not engage in critical reflection as an essential foundation to the development of culturally relevant pedagogy it is questionable whether they will be effective at teaching diverse students. Although well intentioned, they lack the critical consciousness that engenders the proclivity and desire to teach in equitable and counter-hegemonic ways.

Even well-intentioned teachers in schools and teacher educators in universities slip into this role of assuring inequality for children of color, frequently under the guise of helping…teacher education curricula needs to be examined to unmask the hidden assumptions and practices that sustain education's role in maintaining inequality. Educators at all levels need to constantly examine their efforts to determine how their work may actually trivialize race and exacerbate an already dismal situation—they may actually teach racism. (Cross, 2003, p. 209)

Approaching Critical Reflection: Adrian, Lori, Debbie & Theresa

Although most of the participants understood critical reflection within a technical or competency-based framework and in terms of reflection on practice for the purposes of improving practice, three of the participants approached reflection from a more critical framework.

<u>**Adrian:**</u> Distinguishing him from most of the other participants in this study, Adrian embraces a more critical perspective on self- (teacher) reflection. Adrian views multicultural education as a perspective versus a curriculum and believes that teachers need to consider

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children's cultural identities and be aware of their own biases. He elaborates on this when he states,

> Teachers and parents need to acknowledge the fact that we, like our children, are inevitably influenced by the stereotypes and one-sided view of society that exists in our schools and the media. Not only must we recognize these biases, but we must change the attitude they represent by accepting all children as we receive them.

This statement reflects Adrian's awareness that teacher beliefs and biases can influence teachers' actions and relationships with students. In his reference to the "one-sided view of society" he appears to have an understanding that there is an ideology behind the dominant perspective that needs to be challenged and that the teachers have to dismantle their own biases that may be serving as fuel for the dominant ideology. He does not name the ideology—whiteness, nor does he target the issue—racism. Although Adrian is approaching a critical perspective he does not conceptualize beyond a liberal framework where by accepting, respecting and honoring diverse students cultures, backgrounds, experiences, values, etc. is the focus, without addressing power relations and structural inequity.

Lori: When reflecting on how diversity translates into her teaching practices, Lori states the importance of constantly examining her own biases, perspectives and assumptions for any lack of respect for diversity. Unlike most of her peers in this study, Lori speaks of critical reflection in terms of self-awareness and examination of personal biases that cause teachers to act in ways that do not honor diversity. Her interpretation of the term "critical reflection" more closely aligns with the concepts of critical consciousness versus a more competency or technical focused interpretation. However, like Adrian, Lori does not speak in terms of critiquing aspects of schooling (i.e., curriculum, policies, practices, and structures) that may promote inequity and

she does not name the issue—racism, when discussing critical reflection. Her use of language indicates that she does not view reflection as a way to ensure that one's teaching acts do not perpetuate racism and instead focuses on the goal being respectful of diversity. Like her peers, she defines critical reflection from a liberal multicultural framework.

Debbie: In her diversity statement, Debbie reflects on the importance of self-reflection, "As an educator, I continually critique and bring awareness of how my own cultural perspective shapes my opinions, values, and interactions with students, parents, and other professionals and how I demonstrate sensitivity to, while celebrating ethnic differences and viewpoints." Although Debbie articulates critical reflection in terms of how her cultural perspectives influence her as a teacher and her relationship and interactions with students and families, she speaks in vague and superficial terms about why this is important and she approaches reflection from a liberal perspective, focusing on sensitivity to and celebrating of ethnic differences and viewpoints. She doesn't speak in terms of identifying and unlearning internalized biases, misinformation and stereotypes (Tatum, 2001), nor does she appear to have an understanding of the differences in power and privilege and the resultant inequities in our society. Moreover, she does not go beyond a "singular focus on self" to shift the narrow focus of self to "others and conditions of injustice in the world" (Kumagi & Lypson, 2009, p. 783). This pluralistic approach, a hallmark of liberal thought, focuses on the development of sensitivity to and understanding of minority groups, but fails to address why these groups are marginalized and who benefits from their marginalization (Daniel, 2008; Dominelli, 2004; Goode & Schneider, 1994; Van Soest, 2004)

Theresa: As Theresa reflected on her role as a teacher of diverse students in high-need schools, she noted the importance of being self-aware, identifying one's own negative perceptions and being able to set those negative perceptions aside in the best interests of students. Theresa is

aware that teachers can be influenced by their perceptions and that it is important for teachers to

identify and discard any negative perceptions they may hold about students. However, she does

not name critical reflection as a pathway to self-awareness and for identifying negative

perceptions. Theresa articulates the need for "setting aside" any negative perceptions, but as a

student in a program that does not foster true critical reflection, Theresa most likely does not

know how to accomplish this. She has not gone through the process of unlearning racism, which

is elemental to the process of critical reflection towards critical consciousness that incites a

commitment to counter-hegemonic teaching. Theresa does not acknowledge the existing

inequalities and injustices in schools that undermine the success of students of color and as such,

she does not grasp why critical reflection is important nor is she cognizant of the outcome to be

achieved through critical reflection—unlearning racism.

Adrian, Lori, Debbie and Theresa stand out among the other participants with respect to

their view of critical reflection. While the other participants hold more of a technical view of

reflection, these participants communicate an understanding of the importance of self-awareness

and the need to identify biases, assumptions and stereotypes that may inhibit teachers'

effectiveness with students. However, they maintain a liberal stance on diversity as evidenced

by the language that permeates their discourse (i.e., respect for, sensitivity to, awareness,

acceptance and celebration of diversity). The politically correct goal is to be respectful and

tolerant of diversity versus dismantling racism. It is clear that critical reflection intermingled

with the unlearning of racism was not an integral facet of the program. As such, it is unlikely

that true critical reflection that leads to the development of critical consciousness and incites

counter-hegemonic teaching will become central to their practice. Not having achieved race

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consciousness, they are likely to maintain hegemonic ideologies that will inhibit their ability to teach in liberating, empowering and equitable ways.

Lack of Critical Consciousness: Martin

Teachers who lack critical consciousness are prone to operating on pre-conceived notions and incorrect assumptions about students. Without the ability to critically reflect, teachers' response to students' perceived behaviors, values, and attitudes can serve to inhibit student learning and success. For example, in his individual interview, Martin said that he always held a love for reading as a student and that he did not understand why his students do not like to read. Martin's assumption that his students dislike reading reflects a lack of ability to engage in the critical reflection necessary to debunk Martin's presuppositions about his students that place the blame on students versus the array of other factors that could be contributing to what Martin is interpreting as a dislike of reading. Martin does not problematize or critically reflect on the phenomenon he is experiencing and as a result, he uncritically places the blame on the students. Through critical reflection and problem-posing, Martin may be able to identify underlying issues that may be contributing to his students' behaviors, which he is interpreting as a dislike for reading. Instead, his lack of critical consciousness leads him to a simplistic interpretation that reflects deficit thinking and places the blame or source of the problem on his students.

Further demonstrating a lack of critical reflection, Martin was to not able to clearly articulate his values and beliefs related to teaching and learning. However, as the researcher, I was able to gain insight into his beliefs about teaching and learning through his responses to the interview questions and from his written statements. His inability to clearly articulate his philosophy of education not only reflects a lack of critical self-awareness, but also an inability to translate theory gained from his experiences and teacher preparation program into his practices.

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Martin also admitted to a lack of planning for instruction on his part and having more of a "go with the flow" or "take each day one at a time" type of approach, which could place his students at a disadvantage.

It is clear from the participants' discourse that the program lacked in any sociopolitical analyses and approached diversity from the conservative and liberal frameworks versus a critical framework. Teacher preparation within this framework was not structured to be read as a racial text whereby participants would have engaged in a critique and interrogation of the hegemonic ideologies that serve to perpetuate racism and inequity in schools (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Additionally, within the program race, racism, whiteness and white privilege were not addressed in ways that fostered race reflection as a way to dismantle any of the participants' "inconspicuous beliefs, perceptions, and experiences, specifically where race is concerned" (Milner, 2003, p. 175). As a result, the participants did not engage in the process of unlearning racism that would enable them to serve in the best interests of students of color in schools not designed to support their success. Because their preparation was not read as a racial text, the participants did not develop the "permanently critical attitudes" that are essential to their reading the word and the world (Freire, 1973). What is clearly lacking among the participants is an ability to enact a critical and antiracist pedagogy, which "requires teachers to adopt a commitment to thinking, feeling, and acting in ways that combat racial discrimination in schools" (Howard, 2003, p. 199). A major indicator that the participants did not engage in the critical reflection was their display of deficit thinking and colorblind ideology, which they did not acknowledge in themselves, much less the larger ideology of whiteness that permeates school structures, policies and practices.

Philosophy and Practice

The program's implementation of multicultural education falls within a spectrum of the conservative and liberal frameworks of multicultural education (Jenks et al., 2001; McLaren, 1994; Webster, 1997). Coinciding with the program's conceptual makeup, the participants discourse revealed their proclivity towards the conservative and liberal frameworks. Although the participants approach diversity within a span of the conservative and liberal frameworks, a unifying aspect of their ideological makeup is that they appear to view and make sense of the world from a functionalist perspective and buy into the ideologies of meritocracy and individualism. From the functionalist perspective, schools are a part of a larger system of society that is structured in the best interests of all, and they have evolved in natural ways that support the survival of the system as a whole. Success within this system is up to the individual and failure within this system is attributed to deficits within the individual or the individual's sphere of influence.

The participants' responses to the interview questions about philosophy (beliefs about diversity) and practice (how these beliefs play out in their classroom teaching) also provided insights into the multicultural approach (Banks, 2001) of the teacher education program (i.e., contributions, additive, transformative, and social action). The methodologies and approaches to teaching diverse students described by the participants are characteristic of the contributions and additive models, which align with the conservative and liberal frameworks of multicultural education. None of the participants' described teaching approaches reflected the transformative or social action approaches that align with the critical framework.

The contributions approach focuses on what contributions minority groups have made to society and the ways in which diversity has enriched our country. Characteristic of this approach

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are the celebration of minority history, customs, culture, heroes and inclusion of these in the curriculum. The goal of the contributions approach is to sensitize the dominant culture and develop an understanding of the histories of minority groups. This approach is problematic because it promotes assimilation and does not lead to substantive change.

> Without an accompanying active change agenda, it may in fact support Grant and Sleeter's conservative culturally different model and its goal of a melting-pot, homogenous culture. The contributions model often settles for a kind of cosmetic multiculturalism—one that allows administrators and teachers to say, 'We've taken care of that issue' when questioned for example by activist community groups. In its feel-good and humanistic approach it does have liberal qualities; unfortunately, many schools never get beyond it to a study of the issues of power and disenfranchisement. (Jenks et al., 2001, p. 96)

The additive approach aligns with both the conservative and liberal frameworks. The goal of this approach is to compensate for what may be missing from the curriculum by incorporating diverse topics within the required curriculum as appropriate. As an example, two of the participants talked about including New Mexico authors within the literature curriculum as a way to connect with students' backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. The additive approach can be problematic if it is treated as a quick detour or sideshow that allows teachers to check off a box to show that they have addressed diversity and multicultural education versus integrating it in meaningful and authentic ways. If what is added to the curriculum "becomes the basis for a serious study of human relations or the study of a particular minority group with the goal of developing greater understanding and acceptance of a group" (Jenks et al., 2001, p. 97) then it can be considered in alignment with a human relations model (Grant & Sleeter, 1993) and a

humanizing pedagogy that "respects and uses the reality, history, and perspective of students as an integral part of educational practice" (Bartolome, 1994, p. 173).

The participants' responses reflected varying degrees of awareness and understanding of critical and culturally relevant pedagogy as a way to meet the needs of diverse students. However, they did not specifically put a label to their methodologies and approaches and did not make reference to or a connection with culturally relevant or critical pedagogy. The participants did not mention typical terms commonly referenced in multicultural education discourse (i.e., cultural awareness, cultural competency, and cultural congruence). Most of the participants spoke in broad and general terms about their methods and approaches, with the exception of Randy who completed an additional curriculum in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) that was not a requirement for obtaining an alternative teaching license. Randy was able to name strategies when describing how his beliefs about diversity play out in his teaching practices. However, like the other participants, he did not name his methodology (i.e., culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally relevant teaching, or critical pedagogy). Instead, he referenced the broader methodology of differentiated instruction focused on learning styles and academic levels versus race and culture.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995a) argues for the centrality of culturally relevant pedagogy to the academic success of diverse students who have been traditionally underserved and marginalized in schools. Her research with successful teachers of African American students has produced examples of culturally relevant pedagogy in action. She defines culturally relevant teaching as a "pedagogy of opposition not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual empowerment" (p. 160). She identifies three propositions or tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy. First, students must experience academic success.

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Second, students must develop cultural competence, and third students must develop critical

consciousness that empowers them to challenge the status quo of the current social order. The

following table incorporates a review of studies on culturally relevant pedagogy (Morrison et al.,

2008) and operationalizes the three tenets in terms of how teachers apply them.

Academic Success	Cultural Competence	Critical Consciousness
The teacher: -Demands, reinforces, and produces academic success -Attends to students' academic needs (not merely make them feel good) -Use students' strengths as instructional starting points -Is able to get students to choose academic excellence -Invest in and take personal responsibility for the success of students -Believe all students can and must succeed -Hold high expectations for students and provide the support students need to be successful (i.e., scaffolding instruction) -Create and nurture cooperative environments	The teacher: -Ensures students maintain cultural integrity as well as academic excellence -Utilize students' culture as a vehicle for learning -Reshapes the prescribed (traditional/Eurocentric) curriculum to connect with students' identities and make learning meaningful and relevant -Build upon students' funds of knowledge (connecting school learning to children's prior knowledge and cultural experiences) -Understand the need for students to operate in dual worlds of their home community and the White community -Develop equitable and fluid relationships with students that extend beyond the classroom and into the family and community (encourages relationships between school and communities) -Create a community of learners and encourage student to learn collaboratively, teach each other and be responsible for each other's learning.	The teacher: -Shares power in the classroom (gives students a voice and opportunities to make choices about their learning) -Helps students develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities. -Make explicit the power dynamics of mainstream society -Engage students is social justice work -Critiques the school (i.e., curriculum, textbooks, funding, policies, and practices for elements that contribute to inequity -View curriculum content as always open to critique (allows students to discuss controversial topics) -View knowledge as continuously recreated, recycled and shared by the teachers and students and thus are not dependent on state curriculum frameworks or textbooks to decide what and how to teach

(Morrison et al., 2008)

To gain a deeper understanding of the participants' preparedness, I compared their

descriptions of their philosophy and teaching practices to these tenets of culturally relevant

pedagogy. Gay (2000) describes culturally relevant pedagogy as utilizing the "cultural

knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse

students to make learning more relevant to and effective [for students]…It teaches to and through

strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming" (p. 29). Teachers have to

act on the belief that diverse students are capable of learning by holding high expectations and

communicating their belief with their students that they are competent learners (Ladson-Billings,

1994).

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While the participants exhibited elements of the culturally responsive teaching tenets, they did not communicate an awareness of why engaging in these practices is important. Moreover, they exhibited cultural deficit ideology, which is counter to a central tenet of culturally relevant pedagogy—the rejection of deficit based thinking (Howard, 2003). As such, it is questionable whether they will follow through with these practices even when they are challenged or when they are not successful at implementing them. It is difficult to ascertain whether the participants simply lack critical consciousness and as such are oblivious, or if they are consciously choosing to ignore the existence of racism and the role that schools play as an instrument that maintains racism and inequity. The fact that racism was central to the interview and focus group questions and the persistence of the Whiteness-At-Work across the participants' discourse, leads me to believe that the participants chose to steer away from focusing on racism as the issue and to focus more on factors that related to the students and their families, communities, cultures, challenges. Although the participants all expressed a desire to teach in ways that will help diverse students be more successful, they are either not attuned to the underlying racism that perpetuates inequity in schools and society or they are intentionally avoiding race out of fear or discomfort or because they are invested in the ideology of whiteness (self and group preservation). As such, they are not likely to embrace their roles as cultural workers enacting counter-hegemonic pedagogy in schools that are essentially constructed around an ideology of whiteness that contributes to the creation and maintenance of the achievement gap in schools and the deep injustices and inequity in the larger society. Approaching the teaching of diverse students from a deficit framework, they attribute the need to teach differently and act differently in their capacities as teachers, not to any deficiency in the schools' structures,

policies, and practices but instead to deficiencies within the students stemming from family values, dynamics, and structures that the believe contribute to school failure.

The analysis of the participants' responses to the interview prompt, "Describe your beliefs about diversity and how these beliefs play out in your everyday teaching," revealed some themes. First, most of the participants communicated an understanding of the need to connect curriculum content to students' backgrounds and culture, which is reflective of the cultural competence tenet of culturally relevant teaching. As an example, when reflecting on her experience as a learner and how this experience has shaped or informed her teaching, Amy spoke of her desire to include New Mexico authors in the literature curriculum so that students could relate what they are reading to their personal lives. She recognizes the importance of making content culturally relevant to her students and her expressed commitment to adapt the curriculum to make it more meaningful and relevant to students, reflects the cultural competence tenet. Secondly, although the participants' discourse reveals an awareness of the tenets of culturally relevant teaching, the participants also appear to embrace a conflicting view that good teaching is good teaching, irrespective of who (diversity) the students are and they do not articulate how they will achieve their stated goals operationally in their classrooms. Third, the participants did not communicate a commitment to a pedagogy of opposition (Ladson-Billings, 1992) .

The Participants Methodologies: Connecting With Students Backgrounds

Across the board, the participants all mentioned the importance of making curriculum relevant to students' backgrounds, cultures, and experiences and accessing the prior knowledge of students. Only two participants provided a specific example of this and that was the incorporation of multicultural literature. Two of the participants discussed the importance of teachers recognizing biases in curriculum, although it was not clear that the participants who

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mentioned this knew what actions they would take if they encountered these biases. In this section, the participants' philosophies and practices are described in relation to the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Randy:

Distinguishing him from the other participants, Randy took an additional course of study in teaching English Language Learners (ELL), where he was exposed to specific strategies to apply in his classroom. Randy's instructional philosophy incorporates the application of ESL strategies in working with diverse students. In discussing his approach, Randy states, "To be a good teacher one must adapt to all the diversities and differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of all their students... when I apply a multicultural perspective in my classroom I understand where my students come from and what they value." Randy's philosophy indicates that he has developed cultural competence related to the importance developing an understanding of who your students are and where they come from. However, he does not acknowledge why this is important or what to do with this knowledge and how it will impact how he teaches. He did not mention building on student's funds of knowledge (Morrison et al., 2008), which is based on the "notion that school learning must be connected to children's prior knowledge and experiences" (p. 438). Randy approaches teaching diverse students from a cultural deficit perspective, whereby he works to compensate for deficiencies they bring to the classroom without addressing aspects of the school that contribute to his students' inability to be successful. His deficit thinking is clear in the following excerpt from Randy's interview:

> I think it's (achievement gap) a culture thing and like I said I mean they value family and
> religion…so it comes down to culture where you know family is number one and if
> education isn't number one I don't think you're gonna achieve as well as a culture where

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education is number one. Language barriers you know I know half of my parents don't' speak English even if their kids do. So how can they help them with their homework? Um, so I think language barriers hurt. I think poor family lives you know there's a lot of drugs…a lot of violence…um, a lot of people in jail…a lot of divorces I've seen…so, not having that family unit I think hinders minority groups.

The following dialogue between Randy and me further clarifies his deficit stance on the achievement gap:

Me: *So, you're saying primarily, the issue [achievement gap] is with the home?*

Randy: *Yeah.*

Me: *That's why the achievement gap exists?*

Randy: *Yeah, in my opinion.*

Me*: So, not the school, not the teachers, not the student or do you see that maybe there are some other…*

Randy: *Yeah um, there's a lot of apathy these days. You know? Kids don't take ownership. So, I can't blame it all on the parents. Cuz there's a lot of apathy you know? Why do I need to do this? But the main thin when you are talking about uh a minority population um, is I think, their home life in my opinion.*

Roger:

In the following excerpt, Roger reflects on his approach to diversity,

Well, the students are a microcosm of their community um, I don't...I'm comfortable with the range. I'd like to think that I'm pretty open-minded. Um, so I don't see that as a specific challenge for me um, I just think it's natural. I mean, I don't, I don't see color. I

don't see race. I don't see um, they're just students. They're people and so if a particular

student is having issues it's not because of the superficial things it's because there's

something, typically going on at the home and so my challenge is to be as supportive as

possible for that student. If a student has particular um challenges or needs then my job

as a teacher are to address them. Not everybody is the same. I mean you and I are

different. We...in order for me to help my students learn I need to connect with them. I

need to learn about who they are and what their needs are.

Although this excerpt reflects Roger's understanding of the importance of connecting with

students and understanding their individual needs, he clearly exhibits the color-blind ideology as

well as deficit thinking. While Roger recognizes the need to get to know and understand

students, whiteness remains invisible to him and supports his belief that if a student is having

difficulties, these difficulties stem from the home not the school.

Ruby:

In reflecting on her philosophy of teaching, Ruby communicates her belief that students

need opportunities to discover and uncover things for themselves instead of lecture-based

learning. She believes students become more actively engaged if you give them choices about

their learning. As a classroom teacher, she tries to make lessons relevant to her students' lives

because she believes that through this approach, students are more apt to be engaged and

interested. She feels strongly about experiential learning and sees the role of teacher as more of

a facilitator who can "activate their critical thinking." Her willingness to share power with

students by giving them choices about their learning and her practice of making lessons relevant

to her students' lives reflects the tenets of cultural competence and critical consciousness.

However, it was not evident in her discourse that she knows how to accomplish these things

operationally in her classroom, as she did not provide examples from her practice that illustrate how she accomplishes these goals. Moreover, she hasn't developed the critical consciousness that would make racism visible to her as the source of inequity. Thus, she doesn't really understand why teaching differently (culturally relevant and counter-hegemonic pedagogy) is important.

Ruth:

In her written statement Ruth emphasized the importance of "keeping what is the student's background and family life as a fuel toward our classroom learning goals." This statement reflects the cultural competence tenet in terms of building upon students' funds of knowledge and connecting learning to children's prior knowledge and experiences (Morrison et al., 2008). However, Ruth does not articulate how she will enact this in her classroom. Conceptually, she understands the importance, but operationally, she may not be equipped with strategies to make this important proposition a reality. When explaining how her value for diversity translates into her own practices as an educator, Ruth states, "I search for ways of how I can serve them, understand them, and learn from them. If I cannot find ways to connect with them using traditional methods, I try and find my own." Ruth statement reflects persistence towards the academic success of her students, which is one of the three tenets of culturally responsive teaching. However, Ruth does she speak in specific terms about how she will teach differently (adapt her instruction) to ensure the academic success of her students. The intent and desire is evident, but whether Ruth is equipped with alternative methods to enact culturally responsive teaching is questionable. Also because Ruth is not cognizant of power relations and structural inequity, she does not understand why teaching differently (in liberating and equitable

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ways) is important in schools that are structured in ways that are dehumanizing and oppressive to student students of color. Thus, it is not likely she views her role as countering racism.

Tammy:

In Tammy's end of program core values statement Tammy lists her commitments as a teacher related to the core values of diversity and multiculturalism, which are to "make sure that textbooks are not biased and that they include multicultural issues; include students' cultures as part of school activities and discussions; encourage students to respect and understand other cultures and religions; and to encourage students to express themselves." Her commitment to ensure textbooks are not biased and that they include multicultural issues reflects the critical consciousness tenet as she depicts the role of teacher as critiquing aspects of the school (i.e., curriculum and textbooks) that may hinder the success of students of color. However, because she does not problematize schooling or acknowledge schools as structured to maintain inequity, it is not likely she has an awareness of why things like critiquing instructional materials for biases are important aside from structuring learning so that diverse students are more apt to be successful. Although she may be teaching with the intent to target things that may be contributing to the failure of her diverse students, she is not necessarily teaching with a conscious intent to disrupt the hegemonic structures that not only contribute to gaps in achievement in schools, but deep inequities in the larger society. Tammy's reference to including students' cultures as part of classroom activities and discussions is reflective of the additive model, which is aligned with the liberal multicultural framework. Her goal is more about inclusion and respect than about engaging in pedagogy of opposition with clear intent to dismantle racist structures in schools. Although Tammy exhibits a general awareness of what she needs to accomplish as a teacher of diverse students, she does not identify how she would

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achieve these goals operationally by naming specific strategies that she would employ, actions that she would take, or changes that she would apply to the curriculum and her practices. Contrary to the critical consciousness tenet, Tammy does not view the curriculum as an opportunity for critique and an avenue for developing her students' sociopolitical consciousness. As such it is likely that her attempts to include students' cultures in the curriculum will be done in superficially and non-strategically, meaning as it fits within the structure of her teaching and the curriculum. Her approach is likely to take the form of the liberal approach of holidays, foods, and celebrations versus being meaningfully integrated into the curriculum. Her description of her methodology and approach lacks in detail and it is clear that her approach only slightly applies the culturally responsive teaching tenets of academic success, cultural competence and critical consciousness. Given that the development of critical consciousness was not a central goal of the program, it would be an unreasonable to expect that Tammy practice critically conscious teaching.

Theresa:

> Theresa described the characteristics of teachers of diverse students as,
>
> Being open minded and open to diversity, seeking out information about and getting to know families your students come from, being aware of your perceptions and trying to set aside any that are negative, and incorporating appropriate multicultural literature.

She also believes that it is important to teach students critical thinking and questioning skills as well as creativity. She identifies adaptability and flexibility as important characteristics of teachers of diverse students. Theresa appears very sincere in her assertions about her role as a teacher of diverse students. She is aware of the importance of incorporating multicultural literature in the curriculum, understanding where her students come from (culture, values, and

perceptions), which is reflective of the cultural competence tenet. Her focus on higher level thinking skills that will empower her students to be successful in schools and beyond (i.e., critical thinking and problem-solving), is aligned with the academic success tenet. Additionally, Theresa states the importance of self-reflection and identification of negative perceptions, which is indicative of her evolution towards critical consciousness. Although, Theresa exhibits an awareness of culturally relevant teaching, it is not evident that she knows how to achieve this operationally via her actions and practices in a diverse classroom setting. More importantly, Theresa does not appear to have an understanding of why culturally relevant teaching is important as she did not articulate an awareness of power relations and structural inequity nor does she address issues of race within her discourse. Therefore, although she may apply these methods in a classroom, she will not be doing so with the critically conscious intent of countering racism and hegemony. Without critical consciousness, Theresa will not operate from a commitment to transformation through anti-racist and counter-hegemonic pedagogy.

Shelly:

In her interview, Shelly stated the importance of encouraging her students to "respect one another and to share their cultural experiences to improve learning." Shelly identifies project-based learning as a favored methodology to foster a collaborative culture in her classroom that would support and promote mutual caring and respect. This reflects the academic success and cultural competence tenets of culturally responsive teaching, which emphasize the creation and nurturing of cooperative environments and providing students with opportunities to learn collaboratively, teach each other and be responsible for each other's learning within a community of learners structure (Morrison et al., 2008). Shelly approaches diversity in her classroom from a liberal framework (respecting and sharing cultural experiences). Additionally,

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she communicates a willingness to go above and beyond traditional methods and curriculum and to invest in and take personal responsibility for the academic excellence of her students, which is reflective of the academic success tenet of culturally responsive teaching. However, like most of the participants in this study, Shelly has not developed the critical consciousness that would provide clarity around why culturally responsive teaching is important and provoke her desire and commitment to anti-racist and counter-hegemonic pedagogy.

Philosophy and Practice: Summary

Mirroring their definitions of diversity, the participants' teaching philosophies and practices were described by them in broad and general terms and most persisted in skipping over or avoiding altogether discourse around race and racism. Across the board when discussing their philosophies and classroom teaching approaches, the participants did not communicate an understanding of power relations and structural inequity. To most of them, the ideology of whiteness remains invisible and they view schools through a functionalist theoretical perspective. They did not acknowledge the inequities in schools and society that stem from racism and it was clear they held the perception that good teaching is good teaching, irrespective of who you are teaching, which is characteristic of the conservative framework. When probed further as to whether there is a specific skill set that teachers need to develop to be effective at teaching diverse students, the participants responded in very general terms and were not able to articulate what good teaching of diverse students looks like operationally in their classroom, nor did they at any point make reference to culturally relevant teaching or pedagogy.

All of the participants stated the importance of understanding students and their families. The concept and value of getting to know students, connecting content to their lives and accessing prior knowledge is important to culturally relevant teaching and it is apparent that it

was reinforced in the program's curriculum. However, most of the participants approach this from the contributions and additive approaches aligned with the liberal framework as opposed to the critical framework. The participants do not articulate the application of these concepts in the form of specific strategies that are indicative of culturally responsive teaching, nor do they have an awareness of the sociopolitical landscape that makes this type of teaching so critical. Only one participant spoke in terms of actions she has taken to develop this understanding. Most of the participants did not articulate how they would go about gaining this understanding except in general terms. For example, Theresa saw her role as "seeking out information about and getting to know families you're students come from," but she did not articulate how she would go about this. Without targeted and concerted efforts, the participants will not develop a deep understanding of their students and families that will be limited to the bits and pieces they gain through their interactions with students and families making them prone to biases, assumptions, stereotypes and misconceptions about students that may hinder their ability to teach their students effectively. Moreover, the participants have not gone through the process of unlearning racism and have not developed race consciousness. Therefore, their understandings of diverse students and families may be plagued with myths, misconceptions, stereotypes, and pre-conceived notions that will inhibit their ability to teach these students effectively.

In terms of methodologies, few of the participants mentioned specific practices or strategies and they were not able to articulate how they would act or have acted upon their beliefs about diversity operationally in their classrooms. General approaches such as experiential learning and project-based learning were mentioned by the participants, but the majority of the participants spoke in more general terms about instructional strategies they use or would use to meet the diverse needs of students. Although the participants have a general

understanding of what they want to accomplish in a classroom as far as learning environment, curriculum, knowledge of students, and teaching practices, they were unable to articulate how this would occur operationally in their classrooms.

There were important aspects of culturally responsive teaching that across the board were not present in the participants' discourse. Noteworthy is the importance of students maintaining cultural integrity; understanding the dual worlds that diverse students negotiate, extending relationships with students beyond the classroom and into the family and community, helping students develop critical consciousness, and restructuring or transforming the prescribed curriculum to make learning meaningful and relevant to diverse students (Morrison et al., 2008). Although the participants all communicated the desire to help diverse students be successful, they do not exhibit the foundational critical consciousness to set the counter-hegemonic pedagogy in motion that would work to dismantle racism and inequity and serve to liberate and empower students of color who are underserved in schools built on an ideology of whiteness.

Chapter 6: Making Sense of the Achievement Gap: Hegemonic Ideologies

This section will present findings related to how the participants perceive and make sense of the achievement gap as a phenomenon and the hegemonic ideologies that were revealed through the participants' discourse. "The achievement gap comes with its own set of public discourse, that creates connections between students' social identities and their academic achievement" (Yoon, 2012, p. 609). How educators make sense of the achievement gap has direct implications for how they approach their work in terms of closing the achievement gap and working with diverse students in high-need and low-performing schools. It is critical that educators "recognize the powerful ways that race and racism shape and affect access to equity in schooling and can impede efforts toward closing the achievement gap" (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). The language that educators use to talk about student achievement and the achievement gap reveals much about their ideologies and how they will approach teaching. The participants' discourse revealed "unconsciously absorbed assimilationist, white supremacist, and deficit views of nonwhite and low-income students" (Bartolome, 2008, p. xv), such as cultural deficit, meritocracy, individualism and color-blind ideology, characteristic of what (King, 1991) refers to as dysconscious racism. Because reflection within the program was focused on practice versus reflection towards critical consciousness, these hegemonic ideologies were not brought to light or challenged within the program. Additionally, rather than pointing to the centrality of racism, the participants engaged in Whiteness-At-Work, which pointed to "overarching social conditions, feelings in the air, and social distance that may contribute to outcomes such as the achievement gap" (Yoon, 2012, p. 609).

The last individual interview question asked the participants to reflect on their understanding of the achievement gap. The purpose of this question was to tap into how the participants define and make sense of the achievement gap and to stimulate their thinking around this topic in preparation for the focus groups. During the focus groups, the participants engaged in deeper discourse around the achievement gap (definition of, factors contributing to, teacher's role in, and solutions to). As the participants engaged in discourse related to the causes of and factors that contribute to the achievement gap, they primarily focused on students (attitude, motivation, abilities, language), parents/families (attitudes, values, support, engagement), and the students' home and community environments (community involvement/support, violence, poverty, and drugs), and did not engage in a critique of the educational system or schools. Even when prompted to consider racism as a cause of the achievement gap, the participants displayed Whiteness-At-Work (Yoon, 2012), shifting the conversation to focus on what they perceived to be non-racial issues (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004) such as poverty and violence. It is unclear to me as the researcher whether this is intentional and they are consciously electing to avoid or ignore racism as an issue and contributing factor, or they are lacking in race awareness and critical consciousness. Given the functionalist theoretical perspective and liberal focus of the program, I don't believe the participants are race conscious and as such, don't to see the importance of their roles as counter-hegemonic teachers working to dismantle racism in schools and society. Not having engaged in critical reflection with the goal of bringing to the surface and dismantling hegemonic ideologies, they did not develop critical consciousness, engage in deep critical analysis of whiteness, or examine their own privilege. Thus, it is difficult to conclude that in the interest of preserving individual and group status, they have consciously elected to dismiss racism as a factor. Rather, it is likely that lacking in critical consciousness, they are

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engaging silently and unconsciously in the perpetuation of racism and inequality (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) or dysconscious racism (King, 1991). As such, they are likely to engage in politically correct practices that fall within the liberal framework of diversity and multiculturalism that was promoted within the program. What could be intentional is their avoidance of race triggered by discomfort with the topic or fear of appearing racist.

General Findings—Deficit Thinking and Ideology Revealed

In general, the participants' definitions and interpretations of the achievement gap were similar. Based on the analysis of their discourse related to the reasons for and causes of the achievement gap, the participants' rationalizations were reflective of deficit thinking and ideology, further reinforcing that they approach diversity from a liberal multicultural perspective and education from a functionalist theoretical perspective. The participants placed minimal emphasis on the educational system and schools (i.e., curriculum, the teachers, administrators, policies, etc., when engaging in discourse around the causes of the achievement gap. Rather, coming from a deficit perspective, their primary focus was on the students and the student's sphere of influence (i.e., values, habits, attitudes, dispositions, and family dynamics). Frequently cited as a primary cause of the achievement gap was what the participants perceived as an insufficient emphasis and value placed on education as well as an absence of habits in the home that support academic achievement. It was evident that whiteness was the invisible norm in these rationalizations that place the blame for failure on the students and the students' spheres of influence.

Although they did not name it, they frequently compared whiteness as the invisible norm, to what they perceived as shortfalls of the "other" as a justification for the achievement gap. Moreover, the participants used their own upbringing and family practices to support this case.

Frequently cited was the practice or habit of sitting down at the dinner table each night and talking about school. Across the board, they attributed their success to an emphasis on education and achievement in the home whereby, it was an expectation that they would graduate from high school and go on to college. Randy, a young white male teacher said Hispanic families place family and religion first and then education, while education was always first in his home and culture growing up. He points at this "lack of priorities" as the academic downfall of these students and a major contributing factor to the achievement gap. One participant, Tammy, continually pointed to the parents as the source of the problem and their lack of emphasizing the importance of education with their children. For Tammy, who grew up in the Philippines, education is a privilege and because the government is essentially investing in children's educations, parents and families need to value it more and need to emphasize education as a privilege and a responsibility. She believes that parents don't do this enough and that if they did, it would greatly influence the achievement gap. When asked during her interview if schools are equal and if everyone has an opportunity to receive a good education in the U.S., Tammy responds quickly and definitely "yes," revealing a functionalist perspective of the educational system as a "level playing field."

When reflecting on and making sense of the achievement gap, Barbara identifies parent involvement and education as a solution to closing the achievement gap. She neglects to problematize the school environment as a contributor to the achievement gap, while her sole focus is on what needs to change with the child and in the home. Although still within the cultural deficit framework, her response to the factors that contribute to the achievement gap represents a less simplistic view than that of her peers; parents simply don't value education and as a result do not promote it in the home environment. She believes parents value education, but

they don't have the skills needed (are deficient.) In contrast with some of her peers in this study, she refrains from placing the blame on the parents/families, and instead perceives them as not having the means (skills, resources, time, and knowledge) to be able to support their children's academic needs in the home environment. Although she frames this phenomenon differently, her view still falls within the category of cultural deficit ideology. Primary focus is placed on what is not happening in the home (comparing people of color to what she perceives as the dominant culture's family structures, practices and values (the right ways of thinking and behaving), without problematizing the school setting in making sense of the achievement gap.

Another contributing factor to the achievement gap as identified by the participants in both the interviews and the focus groups is poverty. In general they seem to perceive poverty as the deciding factor in relation to the quality of education children receive. However they make no connection between poverty and race and poverty was used as a way to detract from the centrality of race (Whiteness-At-Work) throughout the participants' discourse.

Making Sense of the Gap—Initial Thoughts & Perspectives

This section will describe the participants' initial thoughts and perspectives about the achievement gap as communicated during the individual interviews. In preparation for the focus groups, the participants were asked to reflect individually on what they believe to be the reasons for the achievement gap. The question posed in the interview was, "What are the reasons for the achievement gap and how do you make sense of this phenomenon?" The participants' responses mostly centered on the students, the students' circle of influence (family and community) and societal challenges (poverty, violence, drugs, etc.). Although the participants identified lack of resources, they did not question the lack of resources or engage in a critique of schooling. Factors contributing to the achievement gap offered by the participants included lack of parent

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involvement, lack of value for education, language barriers, cultural differences, and challenges in the home environment (divorce, poverty, drugs and violence), without any acknowledgement of power relations and structural inequality. Lori was an exception in that she alluded to white privilege and racism in her interpretations of the achievement gap. It was clear that the participants viewed educational institutions through the lens of functionalism as neutral and equitable. When probed to consider aspects of educational institutions that contribute to the achievement gap, the participants identified lack of resources and class sizes, but did not question why these schools face these challenges while other schools do not. They appeared unaware of whiteness ideology ingrained in educational institutions that ensures white students are the beneficiaries, while students of color encounter many barriers to their success. These students of color are bound to attribute their own failure within the system to deficits within themselves versus structural inequity and institutionalized racism. The meritocratic ideology permeates educational systems and thinking and serves as a hegemonic tool that preserves and promotes whiteness.

Following are excerpts from the interviews that best illustrate how the participants conceptualize the achievement gap and bring to light the ideologies that frame their understanding of this phenomenon. Most of the participants exhibited deficit thinking and engaged in Whiteness-At-Work throughout their discourse, detracting from racism as a central issue. In this first excerpt, Roger points to the lack of parent and community support as a major cause of the achievement gap, revealing his deficit thinking.

> In pockets of the community where they're underachieving… let's just say they're under achieving versus over achieving districts…is that the parent support is way different. In, the La Cueva district…in the Academy, their parents are driving it and the kids know it.

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Now some may be pushin' too hard but the support is there and the expectations are high.

In the underachieving schools, the expectations aren't as high. The parents aren't

driving. If anything, there's no support. If the kid's successful, it's because the kids

doing it. It's not because anyone is pushing them to do it, and that kid probably could be

successful anywhere. So, lack of parent or community support I think is one of the

highest factors of success or failure of a student and if we're talking a high-need/low-

performing school. It's because it's an area where the parents aren't supporting very

much. The community is not supporting as much.

Roger operates from the assumption that the parents of students in diverse, high-need and low-

performing schools do not have high expectations of their children and are not involved in their

children's education. This excerpt reflects Roger's functionalist theoretical view of schools as

equitable and his belief in meritocracy and individualism. From the functionalist perspective,

Roger does not critique the educational system when reflecting on what factors contribute to the

achievement gap and instead places the blame on parents and the community citing lack of

parental/community involvement and support as the primary reasons students in low-performing

schools are not as successful as students in high-performing schools. Because the program did

not promote critical reflection as a way to develop critical consciousness as a key "take-away" of

the program, it is difficult to distinguish whether he has consciously chosen to invest in and

uphold the whiteness ideology or if he lacks critical consciousness. Had Roger developed the

critical consciousness that would make his own hegemonic ideologies apparent to him, he would

then be able to make the conscious decision to replace the hegemonic ideologies with counter-

hegemonic ideologies.

The following excerpt further illustrates Roger's lack of awareness and recognition of his own privilege as a white male and his belief in the myth of meritocracy.

Well I don't think you can stick your head in the sand bout it [achievement gap]. First, you have to recognize that it's real. Um, and you can make some small contribution. I can make some small contribution in my classes. I can tell em, "Education's important. Here's what you can do with an educated mind you know and I can model and I can tell them it has nothing to do with the fact that I'm white. It has to do with what my character is, what my values are, and if you adopt similar ones, I can help you, I can help you find the right paths. And sometimes who you know has something to do with it. So fine, put yourself at the right place at the right time. But you got be prepared for it first. You gotta be willing to make some sacrifices.

Roger, like his peers comes from the perspective that underachieving students and their families do not value education and that as a teacher he needs to reinforce the importance of education. As a white male, he is blind to or denies his own privilege. He attributes his own success to his character, values and hard work versus his status as a white male. Coming from a conservative multicultural perspective, Roger believes that all students have to do is to be more like him, revealing an assimilationist perspective. He also communicates a paternalistic position, where he positions himself as "savior" who will help his students find the way—his way. Further, Roger is clearly aware that just an education is not enough, but that one has to have the right connections and "be in the right place at the right time." I believe he is aware of whiteness, but detracts from it by focusing on the individual existing in a functionalist society with schools that are fair and equal. There was an arrogance in his voice that communicated he was not going "there" (i.e., acknowledging power relations, structural inequity and racism).

In the following excerpt, Lori also points to the home environment as the primary source of her students' failure.

I feel like I need more time with them cuz they're not necessarily doing a ton of stuff at home. They kinda play a lot of video games and watch TV, so I feel like if we had like an hour or two more, then we could do a lot more stuff.

In this excerpt, Lori reveals many assumptions about what her students' home environments and familial structures consist of. She believes that less time in the home, which she views as deficient, and more time in the classroom would make the difference in terms of the achievement gap.

While at first, with hesitation, Theresa points to prejudice as a potential contributing factor to the achievement gap, she quickly defaults to deficit-based rationalizations.

Well, you know it could be prejudice. Mmm…hmm…it could be prejudice so, it could be you know, I don't know. It could be certain parenting…***definitely*** cultural differences in parenting styles. Maybe the Caucasian group versus the people of color…that might account for some of it or maybe this culture doesn't value certain like things more than others…there's more of a focus I guess on like doing other kinds of activities rather than reading books or something like educational. Maybe they focus more on sports or something like that. I don't know.

Operating on stereotypes and misconceptions about students, Theresa attributes student failure and the gap in achievement between white students and students of color to cultural and value differences. She spends some time reflecting on cultural differences that she believes contribute to the achievement gap and makes assumptions about Caucasians and people of color in terms of the value that they place on education, the types of activities (educational and non-educational)

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and a lack of the structure she believes supports academic success. Comparing students of color to the invisible norm of whiteness, she believes these deficit accounts for the gap in achievement.

A Native American herself, Ruth points to the passivity and quiet nature of Native American children as dispositional characteristics and behaviors that prevent them from being successful.

> Native American kids are very passive…very quiet. I rarely see them ask questions and I think it's a social economic thing. Maybe they don't know how to ask a question. Maybe it's cultural because I wasn't taught that [as a Native American]. I've noticed that Caucasian kids they think about it, they look, and then they ask questions. It's a different type of cultural mannerism…I wasn't taught to ask questions.

Coming from a deficit perspective, Ruth focuses on differences in student dispositions and behaviors that account for the gap in achievement between white students and students of color, with no acknowledgement that schools may not be structured in the best interests of children of color. Through a deficit lens, Ruth places responsibility for failure on the students. In this case and as a Native American herself, she focuses on the passive nature of Native American students and a lack of questioning skills as deficits, which she believes differentiates them from their white peers. The belief here is that if students simply change their behaviors and dispositions (being more assertive and asking questions and in essence behaving more white) they would do better in school, thus narrowing the achievement gap. Lacking in critical consciousness, Ruth views the school as unproblematic and focuses on what needs to change on the part of students of color in order for them to be successful, alluding to the need for assimilation and socialization into the dominant culture. Within this rationalization, whiteness is the invisible norm that children of color are compared to. For example, Caucasian children are thought to be more

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successful because of their dispositions and behaviors, not because schools are structured around an ideology of whiteness that ensures the success of white beneficiaries of a racialized educational system. She does not point to how schools might be structured differently or what teachers could do differently to ensure the success of children of color. Making sense of schools through a functionalist lens, she is not consciously aware of institutionalized racism and how this plays out within the structure of the school or through the practices of educators. Through this lens, schools are neutral socializing agents and any failure to thrive within the realm of the school is a failure on the part of the individual and not the system. If she viewed schools through a critical multicultural and transformative perspective, the school as a system and educators as players within a racialized system would be problematized and critiqued. However, Ruth has not developed critical consciousness and the ideology of whiteness remains invisible to her. She also makes sense of the achievement gap from her experience of someone who grew up in poverty and does not make a connection between poverty and race. In her interview, Ruth pointed to individual teachers as lacking in an understanding of poverty and writing off poor students as uneducable rather than problematizing and critiquing the school as an institution.

The following is an excerpt from Barbara's interview that reveals her deficit thinking. In response to the question of why children of color perform at lower levels than their white peers, Barbara focuses on what she perceives as the absence of habits she believes are essential to academic success.

> Well, there's a wrinkle in that and that's Asian kids. And I think that's important. It's
> like the elephant in the room because I think that there are certain dispositions, I wanna
> say values because I think all cultures have a value for education and achievement and
> they want their kids to do their best. But I think Asian cultures have this…they cultivate

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habits, let's put it that way that they have instilled in their children that help them to be

successful in schools. So, for me, I do feel like there is a habit gap and a skill gap and

that if we were able to kind of share some of these kind of undiscussed habits, which

Jeffrey what's his name is trying to do in Harlem…have you read *Whatever it Takes*?

Like most of the participants in the study, rather than problematizing education as a system,

Barbara points to cultural deficits on the part of the student. In this case she focuses on habits

that she perceives as integral to academic achievement—habits in which she believes the parents

of children of color are lacking, with the exception of those that are Asian. Rather than talk

about the "habits" of white people she focuses on Asians as the "model minority" (Lee, 2009),

perpetuating the stereotype of Asians as models for less motivated racial groups on the grounds

that they exhibit certain behaviors, attitudes, and work ethic, that contribute to their success

(Guofang, 2005). The functionalist belief in equal opportunity underlies and supports the myth

of the model minority and any failure to succeed within a perceived fair and equitable society is

attributed to individual failure (blaming the victim). Her use of the model minority to support

her deficit perspective is an example of Whiteness-At-Work. In playing the *model minority*

card, Barbara deflects from whiteness and minimizes the importance of race. In essence to

counter any racialized interpretations of the achievement gap, she argues that Asians succeed in

the *same* academic environments because they have the *correct* habits. This rationalization

supports the ideologies of meritocracy and individualism, whereby any failure is due to deficits

on the part of the individual not the system. It relinquishes the system (of education) from any

responsibility for the achievement gap and deracializes it as a phenomenon.

Randy's response to the achievement gap interview question also reflects the deficit

ideology.

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I think it's a culture thing and like I said. I mean they [Latinos and Chicanos] value

family and religion so when grandpa is sick, Destiny is staying home because Destiny's

gotta take care of these three little boys so it comes down to culture where you know

family is number one and if education isn't number one I don't think you're gonna

achieve as well as a culture where education is number one. There's a lot of apathy these

days, you know? Kids don't take ownership. So, I can't blame it all on the parents, cuz

there's a lot of apathy you know? But the main thing when you are talking about a

minority population is I think their home life in my opinion.

Randy compares his own culture (the dominant culture) to Hispanic and Mexican families and

attributes the failure of Hispanic and Mexican students to a deficit in their value systems, where

their focus he believes is not on education. In turn he attributes the success of white students to a

value system that places education first. Randy also attributes the failure of minority students to

a lack of motivation or apathy. He clearly approaches education from a functionalist perspective

and buys into the ideologies of meritocracy, individualism and self-determinism viewing schools

as neutral versus structured to perpetuate inequality and maintain the existing hierarchal

structures of society.

Adrian's initial reflections on the interview question relating to the achievement gap

reflect a more complex interpretation, but his thought process still leads to deficit thinking and

ideology. In this case, the deficit is related to parent expectations.

I think it's a combination of factors. I think class sizes are entirely too large…I think

teachers need to incorporate their (students') interests. I think districts see the

achievement gap but I don't think they fully address it. They throw out a program, try it

for a year and then if it works or doesn't work no big deal then they wait for the newest

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thing and then it comes up…they try something new. What could be influencing the

child? Their background, their home life, poverty, whatever their family situation is and

unfortunately a lot of parents because they're not welcomed into education therefore they

do not, most parents I think want their children to do better than what they did, but

usually that's the extent of it. Instead of saying I want my child to do well on their tests

or to be a well-rounded individual, most parents shortchange their kids. It's like well if

they graduate, they're happy with that.

Although in the first part of this excerpt Adrian points to factors of the school that may

contribute to the achievement gap, he does not see these factors as part of a larger and resolute

system structured to maintain inequity. Like most of the participants, he does not identify racism

as a factor contributing to the achievement gap, even when probed. Further, he communicates a

belief that parents do not adequately support their children's education, hold low expectations

and "shortchange" them. However, Adrian does acknowledge that parents may be

uncomfortable in school environments that do not feel welcoming or inviting.

Demonstrative of the deficit ideology, Jason points to social problems and socioeconomic

issues in making sense of the achievement gap.

The socioeconomic situation families have to deal with today… I see a lot of kids who

might be living with extended families or being raised by grandparents or single moms,

custody battles that are affecting the child in the classroom. Sometimes I do think you

know? How did their world get so convoluted? Because in the end the kids are the ones

who are being affected and suffering and you can see those who are actually excelling

academically in reading and math have like a stable home…so that parenting

role/caretaker involvement seems to be what makes the difference as opposed to you

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know a dysfunctional family, cuz we have a lot of those today…it's more to create a

habit for them of homework…so I think the parent involvement is what's taking away

maybe from these kids actually succeeding.

Like many of the participants in the study, rather than problematizing schooling, Jason hones in

on deficits as the source of the problem and acknowledges that socioeconomic issues contribute

to this. However, he does not display an understanding of historical racism and power relations

that contribute to poverty and other social problems. He also comes from a deficit perspective

when he points out a lack of the "habits" that he believes are integral to academic success. As a

person of color himself, rather than problematizing the school and educational providers, he

points to the student and remains within the student's circle of influence in his interpretation of

the achievement gap. In turn, Jason attributes success to what he perceives as "right" habits in

the home that he perceives as support academic achievement.

Tammy more vividly and pointedly focuses on deficits on the part of the parents when

making sense of the achievement gap and, even when probed, she does not problematize aspects

of schooling that may contribute to the gap in achievement between children of color and white

children. She seems oblivious to the power relations and inequity that contribute to the

achievement gap.

I think it will be the parents…if the parents like the Hispanic if the parents do not speak

English they can't really help the students. That's one. And number two again, going

back to emphasis on education if the parents even if they're poor, if the parents you know

say you know this is important. This is how you get out of the cycle of poverty you have

to be serious about you know education. I think it's the attitude of parents has a lot to do

with how, because that's how I was brought up. I mean education was number one."

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Tammy pulls from her own experience growing up in the Philippines in her rationalizations of

the achievement gap. She appears oblivious to the hegemonic ideologies (meritocracy and

individualism) she is reinforcing. Clear in this excerpt, she operates from a deficit perspective in

that she points to inadequacies and even failures on the part of the student and within the

student's circle of influence (i.e., parent/family, language, values, and attitudes) without

acknowledging power relationships and inequity in schooling that maintain the opportunity and

achievement gaps. It is also evident that Tammy has bought into the "bootstrap theory" and

believes that it is up to the individual to break the cycle of poverty, by placing adequate emphasis

on and value for education and pulling oneself up from the bootstraps (hard work, commitment,

persistence, determination, etc.). She makes sense of the achievement gap from a functionalist

and deracialized perspective. From her framework of understanding, it is the students and

parents that need to change, not schools or society. Specifically, she makes the assumption that

parents are not serious about education, to which she attributes academic failure within what she

perceives as a fair and equal system [education].

Ruby attributes the achievement gap to cultural values, but places more emphasis on

poverty.

Cultural…I mean values…cultural values might be a part of it. I mean, money makes a

big difference too, you know? I hate to put an emphasis on but just a reality, you know?

If you have enough money so that you can engage in different experiential activities and

just kind of you know have a chance to be exposed to different places and different

peoples, it does, it makes a difference I think.

Ruby approaches the achievement gap from her own perspective as someone who grew up in

poverty and felt that she was deprived of opportunities because she was poor and not necessarily

due to minority status as a Native American. In rationalizing her own experiences of being

marginalized and devalued as a student in schools, she does not mention race, but rather points to

poverty. She believes that teachers made assumptions and judgments about her because of her

appearance and dress—judgments that affected her academic performance in the long term (i.e.,

placing her in special education). However, she doesn't critique or problematize the schools in

terms of ideology, structure, policy and practice. For Ruth, the achievement gap boils down to

poor students not having access to the same types of experiences of more wealthy students—a

deficit stemming from the home. Whether she is aware of it or not, Ruth's emphasis on poverty

without any connection to race reflects a color-blind view of the achievement gap, making race a

non-issue.

> Shelly also points to differences in cultural values as the source of the achievement gap.
>
> Even in the immigrant population, I think overall values are very different. Education is
>
> not the most important thing. I think when I was growing up it was the most important
>
> thing. It was the only thing. So if my grades weren't the best that they could be,
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> everything else went away. And I don't think that happens now. I think that there's a lot
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> of other expectations of students that are not, are not placed on me as a white student and
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> I don't think that are placed on students who have resources so I think that's pretty
>
> significant. I think that you know the substance abuse, that kind of stuff would heavily
>
> affect the population of students without resources.

Shelly makes sense of the achievement gap within a framework of *haves* and *have nots* and does

not make any connection between poverty and race. As such, her focus detracts from the

centrality of race. While Shelly ties the achievement gap to socioeconomics and social problems

in her rationalizations of the achievement gap, her central focus is on value differences and it is

clear from this excerpt that Shelly believes that for people of color, education is not a priority and that for her and other members of the dominant class, the primary value placed on education is the reason why white students achieve at higher levels than students of color. Coming from a deficit perspective and a conservative multicultural perspective, she believes that a shift in values (assimilation into the dominant culture) is what is needed to close the achievement gap.

In their initial reflections on the achievement gap during the individual interviews, most of the participants did not make mention of race or racism. Even when informed of the data that shows that when controlled for socioeconomic factors the achievement gap still exists, the participants did not point to racism. Rather, their deficit view of students and the students' spheres of influence persisted. While a few of the participants pointed to socioeconomics and social problems as contributing to the achievement gap, they did not make a connection these and race. Their rationalizations reflected the deficit perspective and the ideologies of meritocracy and individualism. It is likely that they will promote the hegemonic ideologies as teachers in diverse, high-need and low-performing schools due to either a lack of critical consciousness or an investment in the ideology of whiteness. As the researcher, I believe the former to be more likely, as the participants did not have the opportunity within the program to engage in the deep critical reflection involving the unlearning of racism that is necessary to the development of critical consciousness. Had the participants developed critical consciousness, they would have been able to choose their stance, whether it be anti-racist and counter-hegemonic, politically correct and hegemonic, or an investment in self and group preservation. Unless they develop critical consciousness, whiteness will remain invisible to them and they will continue to promote hegemony through their practices. Their inaction towards injustices will serve as a detriment of students of color.

The participants were asked a pointed question about what race has to do with education and throughout the interview and focus groups, were probed to reflect more critically about the achievement gap. However, through Whiteness-At-Work, the participants detracted from racism by continually shifting the topic to focus on what they perceived to be non-racial issues (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Chubbuck, 2004; McIntyre, 1997; Rogers & Mosley, 2006) thus distancing themselves from the relevance or urgency of caring about racism (Yoon, 2012).

Making Sense of the Gap: Focus Groups

After reflecting individually on the introductory interview question designed to initiate general ideas and perceptions about the achievement gap, the participants participated in focus groups (five participants per group) structured around the topic of the achievement gap. The focus group questions were designed to engage the participants in deeper discourse about the achievement gap (i.e., definition, causes, solutions, and their roles as teachers in diverse, high-need and low-performing schools.

The first question was, "what is your understanding of the achievement gap and what roles do race, racism, poverty, educational systems, and structures play in this phenomenon?" In all of the focus groups, the achievement gap was discussed as a test score and concerns were expressed that the New Mexico Standards Based Assessment (NMSBA) may be biased in that it does not measure progress and growth of students. Exhibiting a more critical perspective, Lori expressed concerns that the tests used to measure student achievement are not just biased in terms of an inability to authentically capture what students know and measure progress, but culturally biased and hegemonic in terms of how they are structured. She states,

> I agree with the first thing I think of when I think of the achievement gap is the SBA and
>
> AYP and how kids are doing on it and I think that's really problematic not just cuz it's

one, one test and one snapshot in time, but two, cuz the test is very biased and it just

kinda tests how white and how middle class you are. It's [the test] created by white

people and it's created I mean as a system for white people to keep benefitting them and

you know too as far as like poverty when you come in you're coming from you know

maybe there's some violence at home or an unstable situation, who cares about tests?

Like honestly who cares about math? Who cares about reading? You're just trying to be

safe. And I just think that shifts your priorities if you're basic needs aren't necessarily

being met at home.

Although initially, Lori engages in a critique of standardized assessments and the cultural bias

that makes it difficult for children of color to test high on these assessments, Lori still resorts to

deficit thinking. She portrays students as not caring about education but attributes this to

poverty, rationalizing that students' priorities are not learning and academics. She attributes

student failure to the lack of basic needs being met within unstable home environments. While

Lori was the only participant to bring up whiteness and structural elements within schools as

institutions that perpetuate inequity and maintain white privilege, none of the participants in

Lori's focus group acknowledged or reacted to her statements. I would characterize the manner

in which she, through her discourse, quickly steered away from racism and whiteness towards

the topic of poverty (a topic that the participants appeared comfortable speaking about) as

Whiteness-At-Work. Moreover, the lack of reaction to and acknowledgement of Lori's

statements served to silence her (Whiteness-At-Work), as she did not pursue these assertions any

further during the focus group. Further, although Lori acknowledges how whiteness plays out in

the system of education, she still places blame on the students (not caring about education) but

relinquishes them at the same time because of the social problems that they face.

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All three focus groups spent a considerable amount of time focusing on poverty and issues stemming from students' home environments as root causes of the achievement gap. Immediately following Lori's statements Debbie chose to build on Lori's comments that she perceived as relating to poverty versus racism and whiteness. She states,

> Children of poverty who don't have a mom at home who actually probably have to fend for their own self or their siblings, they're not going to be at the same level as say a child who has you know a mom reading to them or mom nurturing them. Stable home life…these children are not getting their emotional needs met, which, like you [Lori] said, can't really focus on academics if those basic needs aren't met.

Not only does Debbie make reference to the home environment as a deficit, but she also makes the assumption that children of poverty (children of color) are not raised by nurturing mothers who do not read to them, thus contributing to the achievement gap. Debbie does not acknowledge the inequity in schooling that perpetuates inequity and the achievement gap, and instead places the focus on students and parents in her rationalizations of the achievement gap. In this excerpt the deficit is related a lack of nurturing and engagement in academic-type activities on the part of mothers.

Communicating a different perspective, Ruby attributed the achievement gap to a lag in the educational system in responding to the demographic changes of our society. Having already expressed that she has felt oppressed as a white female and framing racism as a "white male thing," Ruby states,

> Our society is still really driven by white males, and so I don't think it addresses the needs of all the other populations in the country and our country's becoming like more and more diverse like in the last twenty years we've had I think more immigrants come in

than in the whole 200 years of our prior history and so I don't think the educational

system is changing fast enough to keep up with that.

Ruby critiques education in terms of its failure to respond to the demographic shifts in our

society, but does not acknowledge structural inequities that contribute to the achievement gap.

Although Ruby makes reference to society as controlled by white males, she does not

acknowledge her own privilege as a white female and positions herself as one of the oppressed.

Ruby exhibits white guilt and later goes on to discuss her own lack of privilege as a white female

in a white male dominated society. Ruby states,

To me that's the white male [laughter] because to me as a woman, I feel like I haven't

had equal opportunity either and you know in a lot of cultures women don't even get an

education. They're not allowed to get an education and I feel like yeah, you, if you're a

woman in society you have to get a greater education in order to even come close to

making and being valued the same the work that a man does.

The manner in which Ruby, through her discourse steers away from whiteness to focus on

gender and her own oppression as a female is an example of Whiteness-At-Work. This

effectively redirected and deracialized the dialogue. Her statements also reflect a colorblind

ideology and liberal multicultural perspective that positions racism as a non-issue. Even when

challenged, with the question, "Do you feel that you have more power, privilege um, open doors

I guess than a woman of color or maybe males of color?" (Interviewer). Ruby responds, "I don't

really see that but you know it could be unconscious [laughter]. I don't know. Not necessarily

as a white woman do I have more influence and power or opportunity than women of other color

or men of color."

It is clear in this excerpt that Ruby does not acknowledge her own privilege as a white female. In her earlier statement she focuses on her own lack of privilege as a white female in what she perceives as a white male dominated society, but she does not acknowledge that people of color have even less privilege than her. Ruby's tone and mannerisms when talking about race communicated a sense of discomfort. Her way of avoiding the discomfort was by posturing herself as the victim or "other."

Shelly also exhibited Whiteness-At-Work and white guilt shifting the topic from race to focus on poverty. She spoke about her experience growing up in the Midwest. She states, "The opportunities for those that are white, which I am, are better and I think that for upper class families who have resources available to them, there's just so much more available to those families." Although Shelly's initial focus is on poverty and lack of resources as major contributors to the achievement gap, she still reverts to deficit-based rationalizations, which in this case have to do with priorities. She states,

> When those things aren't there, [poverty] they don't exist, I think education is a higher
> priority and so I think that's also and can have a higher priority in those families and I
> think that's what causes our achievement gap. Also is how much value is placed on an
> education and you know maybe in lower income areas the focus is more on you know
> creating a vocation as opposed to receiving an education you know opportunities to get a
> job and some students leave school without completing their education for that reason.

While Shelly is clearly comparing people of color to the norm of whiteness, her language is deracialized and she refers to people of color as "those families." Shelly makes sense of the achievement gap from a deficit perspective, asserting that the value placed on education, which she believes is lacking, is what prevents students from being successful and causes the gap in

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achievement. She does not question the lack of resources in some schools and does not critique

schooling in terms of how policies, practices, and structures contribute to the failure of students

of color. Shelly's rationalizations place people of color in a position of choice, where they

choose to drop out of school to take a vocational path rather than graduating from high school

and pursuing a college degree, which would give them more opportunities. The reality is, in

many cases students of color are discouraged from pursing college degrees and "pushed" into

vocational programs, which counselors perceive are a better "fit" for these students.

When reflecting on what the achievement gap looks like in her school, Lori detracts from

race by focusing on poverty. She states,

> I see it with the kids who have more money. How they dress. How they carry
>
> themselves. The student demographic is predominantly Hispanic or white. I don't know
>
> the percentages right now but yeah, I see it with my…you know which kids come from
>
> money. You know just different things like school supplies and do they even bring
>
> school supplies and stuff like that... if they have new shoes. Kind of if they are groomed
>
> too cuz they may not… they have really dirty nails or their hair's way too long or
>
> something.

Tammy added to Lori's statement,

> Or they don't wash their clothes. I mean I have this kid who has been wearing the same
>
> thing and the counselor was saying, 'I'm gonna buy you a jacket and please let me clean
>
> your clothes, I'm gonna...so the counselor went out of her way to buy her some clothes.

Lori indicated her belief that within her own school all students are on a level playing

field, but acknowledges that in comparison to other schools within her district there is a

disparity. About the students in her school she states, "Most of them live in an apartment and

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they just they have really similar backgrounds. A lot of violence. They know a lot about drugs.

Yeah…" When probed further to reflect on whether she believes that her students are receiving

an equal education as compared to other students across the state in other areas, Lori states,

> No. I mean we don't have materials. We don't have enough practice books. We
> don't have enough textbooks. We have roaches in the cafeteria. We have like
> we're out of toilet paper apparently we have no soap. Um, yeah, but those are the
> only, that's the only type of school I've worked at.

Lori acknowledges a deep disparity when comparing her students' educational experience with

her own experience as a student in schools. She states,

> From my experience it would be completely different. My personal experience was
> completely different from what I've seen as a teacher cuz I've always taught in schools
> um, that were either Title I or a 100% free lunch so, which is not at all my frame of
> reference. So I see a huge disparity there. Huge difference. I mean I don't think they're
> given maybe they're given 10% of what I had, and I grew up in Texas so it's a different
> state, but still I would say they maybe have 10% of what we had as far as opportunities
> and materials, environment and um, how the teachers dealt with us. Stuff like that.

Although Lori recognizes the disparity between her own experience in schools and that of her

students, she does not question or challenge why this disparity exists, but rather from a

functionalist perspective accepts the disparity as, "just the way it is" or "just the way things

played out." Earlier, Lori alluded to the general attitude of acceptance among her colleagues of

the dire conditions of their school without taking an advocacy role and working to change the

conditions. She also alluded to a sense of disempowerment among the teachers.

In reference to lack of resources of students who live in poverty, Tammy's discourse reveals a meritocratic and individualistic perspective on education. She states,

I'm from the Philippines. As a student there used to be 60 of us in one classroom and I mean a lot of teachers here would be shocked. Sixty, but we seemed to have been able to learn and we also don't have [resources], so we learned do deal with you know access but, we most of us went to college…and most of us were poor in the Province so I don't know. I think that even if people are poor if they always they emphasize with their kids that education is important and you don't need money to remind your kids that you need to do your homework. I think it's also the attitude of parents if they always remind their kids that it's [education] important because I didn't really see that problem in the Philippines, about you know we don't, we didn't have the resources but we dealt with it you know? I mean you have to…but we all were maybe 70% of us in that school went to college and were successful.

She goes on to emphasize the lack of resources in the Philippines versus the resources in the United States. She states,

Cuz you [United States citizens] have a lot of resources. I mean picking up children on the bus. I mean there [Philippines] you would walk and you'd start walking at 6'oclock [in the morning] just to walk to school. I mean one of my friends, she didn't have any shoes but she's, you know, she has her own accounting firm right now but again that was poverty in the Philippines and yet it worked so and because her parents were always reprimanding her so maybe that's another point of view. Why other poor countries can succeed you know they didn't have the resources and one teacher with 60 students.

Tammy's view point and assertions were not challenged by the other focus group participants. Tammy's discourse within the focus group is in alignment with her responses to the achievement gap question from her interview. From a functionalist perspective, Tammy assumes schools are a level playing field and a privilege that should be valued and taken advantage of. Her view is that schools are an opportunity and it is up to the individual to make the best of that opportunity. She believes that failure stems from the home. From her perspective, parents need to emphasize education more in the home, participate more in their children's education and place more of a value on public education, which she feels is taken for granted by students and parents. Her frame of reference is her own experience as a learner growing up in the Philippines. Although Tammy references the "tripod of success," where the student, teacher, and parent all hold a critical role in the educational process, coming from deficit perspective, she places much more emphasis on the parent and student and what is wrong in the home and family dynamics/value system. Using her friend, the accountant, she reflects her belief in the bootstrap theory and the ideologies of meritocracy and individualism, solely attributing correct values and hard work to her friend's success. Tammy will likely place the blame for failure on students and parents rather than identifying and working to change hegemonic policies, practice and structures of schools that perpetuate the achievement gap.

Debbie alludes acknowledges there is a lack of respect for education on the part of parents. However, she also expressed the belief that there is a lack of respect for students in schools. She alludes to the tendency for educators to operate from a need for control. Not responding to Debbie's remarks about lack of respect for students, Tammy moves the conversation back in the direction of students and parents and how they contribute to the problem. She again compares education in the Philippines to education in the states. She states,

In the Philippines, teachers are in a pedestal like wow, they're God [laughter]. I mean

that was my feeling [as a student]. You can't question them, but anyway when I started

subbing in the states I was like was, hey you know there's really no respect for, I mean

that was the first shock that I had the way they [students and parents] treat the teachers.

Tammy's belief that teachers are not respected in American society allows her to focus on her

own disempowerment versus the oppression of her students.

In response to how the education of children of color might be different than hers, Ruby states,

I compared it with my schooling and how it was different from that and I went to school

in upstate New York back in the 60s. Not a wealthy community at all. Just average and

my school was pretty much 100% white but what I, I don't know I, I don't think

education, I don't know if it's the difference in the time period the state, the geography,

or the cultural cuz New Mexico's always had a cultural, more cultural diversity than I, I

grew up with but, I don't feel like students are performing as well here as in my school

back then, so, I don't know, I think maybe part of its upbringing or expectations of

students maybe aren't as high as they used to be and that's not just teachers. It's

parent…its society as a whole. I don't know.

Ruby rationalizes the achievement gap through the lens of her own experience. She attended all-

white schools in upstate New York and emphasized her own lack of privilege (lack of wealth).

In making sense of the achievement gap Ruby compares schools she attended, which were 100%

white to the schools in New Mexico, which serve high percentages of children of color. She

attributes failure in New Mexico's diverse schools to deficits in how children are being raised

and the lack of expectations. Ruby does not critique schooling in terms of how schools may be

structured inequitably nor does she communicate an understanding of power relations and

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structural inequities that fuel the achievement gap. She exhibits a functionalist theoretical perspective of schools as fair and neutral, placing the blame for failure on the part of students and their families.

In making sense of the achievement gap, Shelly reflected on her own experience as a learner growing up in the 70s and 80s in a primarily white, middle class, post-farming community. In her reflections, she recalls the desegregation of the Kansas City school system she attended.

> They bussed out all the Black students from the inner city schools and so my school in one year did a flip flop and I became the minority the last year that I, the year that I graduated and so it was very adverse to our educational experience not because the students were Black and it affected the white students, but it just changed the whole culture, the whole environment we were in. It overcrowded the school. We weren't prepared for another 1,200 students on a campus so a lot of things changed. Simple things like we used to have lockers and the lockers became you know only an upper class men thing because there weren't enough for everyone.

In this excerpt, Shelly comes from a position of white egocentrism in that she focuses primarily on the negative implications of desegregation on her and other white students like her. Her use of the term "adverse" implies that she saw desegregation as having a negative impact. She makes an attempt to couch her statements by saying that it was not because the students were black, focusing instead on how the increase in the number of students contributed to adverse conditions of the school (overcrowding and scarcity of resources), without acknowledging that for students of color, lack of resources has always been a reality. Further, Shelly did not reflect on what the experience of the Black students might have been or about the principal of

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desegregation. Growing up in an all-white community, she did not have any experiences with people of color until she was in high school, and as a teacher her experiences remain limited. This may be contributing to her lack of understanding of the experience of students of color in her school leading to her deficit thinking. Because she was not probed to critically reflect in her teacher preparation program, Shelly is not cognizant of whiteness and how it impacts her students of color who are navigating in a radicalized system of education.

Although it appears that Lori comes from a more critical perspective than the majority of the participants, her rationalizations related to an unjust textbook policy reflect a more conservative and hegemonic perspective that conflicts with her earlier statements related to racism and whiteness. The common practice in diverse high-need and low performing schools of not allowing students to take textbooks home was brought to light in the focus groups. Lori, who exhibits a higher level of critical consciousness in the interviews, exhibits cultural deficit ideology when reflecting on this policy and practice. She states,

> We have one class that has eight textbooks and they have to share it among 20 students. So, I don't want the books to go home because I won't, I won't see it again and the parents either can't pay for it, they won't pay for it, or how do we get it back right? And you know you can threaten and not release the record. We're not gonna keep kids records. I think a lot of parents don't have the money. They just don't and so and if the book gets lost or if it gets damaged or it gets shuffled around in the move…resources are scarce. And too, they make adjustments. I don't know if this is like a flimsy excuse but on the homework, the practice sheets, it says everything they need to know as long as they paid attention in class.

It was pointed out to Lori that in other schools, students are allowed to take books home to study and do homework and in some cases students have a copy at school and a copy at home make it more convenient for them and ensure they have the resource available at home at school. Lori's responds to this from the defensive when she detracts from a focus on the injustice by moving the discussion to focus on adverse relationships between teachers and students, positioning herself as the victim. Further, she justifies the policy by providing a rationalization for why it is better that they cannot take their textbooks home.

> But that's how it should be cuz then the kids can say, this is a story I read at school today you know it gives more opportunities even for parents to, I mean I feel like some parents just don't know where to begin, don't know where to start and one of the things about the respect is I wonder like how they perceive me you know and I sometimes feel like there's a lot of resistance from parents. A lot of times the first thing you know if you bring up a behavior concern or whatever they say well what have you done about it you know so you have to defend yourself.

Although in her interview and earlier in the focus group, Lori projected a stance of compassion and understanding for the challenges of her students and families, she communicates a negative view of parents that takes on a condescending tone. Rather than an empowering view of parents, she holds a deficit view of parents and it appears she is threatened by parents as well. She held firm on her support for the policy and rather than questioning why it is okay for students in some schools to have this privilege and not others, she puts forth a justification for why it is better that her students are not able to take their books home. Rather than getting to the root of the problem (lack of resources), Lori is stuck defending the policy. From this defensive position, Lori is able to remove herself from the injustice and relinquish responsibility for changing it. It is clear that

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at this point, Lori would not be likely to advocate for change of this hegemonic policy that counters her students' potential for achieving success. While earlier Lori communicates a belief that her students' home environments are not conductive to their academic success, she supports and defends a policy that prevents students from having access to school resources from home. In her justification, Lori also communicates her belief that parents don't know what to do with the textbooks or even how to begin to help their students anyway.

Jason and Ruby come from a deficit perspective when they point to the lack of positive role models in kids' lives as a contributor to the achievement gap. Ruby states,

> I think another thing that's missing from a lot of school classrooms is positive role models and what I mean by that is that it's mostly white women who are teachers and so the colored child boy has maybe no one to model behavior on and they don't have a male parent at home you know, what do they do?

Ruby clearly recognizes the cultural racial mismatch between a predominantly white, middle class and female teaching force and increasingly diverse student population.

Jason states,

> Well as a teacher I see myself, and I, I don't know if, it's the right way to see myself, but that's how I feel as a role model. Like, first and foremost as a role model and I know that a lot of teachers don't see themselves as that. They see themselves as instructors as people who are there to transmit knowledge and teach them their ABSs and their numbers or as they get older maybe different type of knowledge you know physics, uh, I don't know, geometry all the things that involve more, but uh, I always think that uh, it begins with me being a role model. You know, being, being, and acting the way that I want my kids to act bec…especially the ones that I'm working [with] because I think that they,

they can copy my behavior but also it might be something they don't see at home. So, I want them to see okay you know maybe, maybe my dad comes to school in flip flops and he drinks beer on the weekends or whatever, whatever, I don't know a lot of things I just speculate, uh, with regards to parents or I, or I'm just repeating because I've heard them tell me this, you know because at the same time I feel that I also have to be, not buddies but um, establish some socially acceptable relationship with the parents so that they can feel comfortable…so I see myself as a role model first and foremost, second maybe as an educator and instructor where I'm transmitting or imparting knowledge.

Both Jason and Ruby identify the lack of positive role models as a primary contributor to the achievement gap. They make an assumption that students of color do not have positive role models in their lives and that they, as teachers have to compensate for this deficit. From this perspective, the role of the teacher is to be a "savior," which may take the focus away from academic excellence and contribute to an inferior learning experience for students. Coming from a deficit perspective, students are viewed as needing to be rescued and that the role of teacher is to show them the way.

In his reflections about the causes of the achievement gap, Adrian acknowledges a lack of opportunity for some, but he maintains an underlying focus on deficits.

I think it's a combination of factors. I think there's…for some, I think there's a lack of opportunity um, balancing it out I think there's also a small percentage who that like I say I think there's a small percentage of minorities who make excuses instead of following through. I think that our opportunity is out there, but either their not knowledgeable enough to find them or look for them or they feel that because they've had to quote

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unquote overcome things they're quick to look for uh direction instead of more self-

initiative.

In this excerpt Adrian reveals his belief in equal opportunity and an ideology of individualism

without acknowledging the un-level playing field of the American educational system and how it

places students of color at a disadvantage making it difficult for them to achieve and be

successful in schools.

Jason also alludes to deficits in making sense of the achievement gap,

So that parenting role caretaker involvement seems to be what makes the difference as

opposed to you know a dysfunctional uh, family. Cuz we have a lot of those today. So,

there's maybe not one person who is responsible for the child to do the work also at home

and of course you know the work is not that difficult. It's more for to create a habit for

them of homework and I can see it also with my kids, um that maybe as they were

younger, I, I used to do the same that that my dad you know, do you have homework?

Do you need help with your homework? And um, some, my daughter, she, she

automatically does all that stuff because she already used to it. Many times I ask and

they say I already did it. And I know they, I know they did it, I mean I can see.

Sometimes I'll sign for it. So, so, there's a trust too and uh, and that might be something

that's lacking in some of these families and the children. So, I, I think the parent

involvement, is, is what's um, taking away from these kids actually succeeding?

Jason further reveals a meritocratic ideology in the following excerpt:

I always have to go back to my family but um, in my case I think it was um, my dad,

because he always stressed the importance of being educated and that's something that I

also do with my own kids you know cuz I always tell them you know even if, even

though now I have my doubts because of everything that I'm facing but, but I always tell

them that if they get a good education they have a better chance of succeeding and also I

tell them that a lot of doors are gonna open too…

Jason makes sense of the achievement gap through a deficit lens. He attributes failure to the

absence of a strong value for education, a lack of reinforcement in the home (habits that he

perceives as integral to academic achievement).

Meritocracy, Individualism, and Schools as the Great Equalizer

The program's functionalist perspective was mirrored in the participants' discourse

around the achievement gap. Their discourse revealed minimal critique of the educational

system and schools and there was a general perception of schools as the great equalizer. Because

the participants view the educational system as fair and equitable, they believe schools are

structured to serve in the best interests of all students. They did not problematize schools

(structures, policies, and practices) when reflecting on and making sense of the phenomena of the

achievement gap. The participants operate on the belief that school policies and structures are

designed to serve in the best interests of students and do not appear aware of power relations,

structural inequities and institutionalized racism as contributors to the achievement gap. When

making sense of the achievement gap, the participants focused mainly on the students and their

families/communities in identifying the source of the problem without problematizing and

critiquing policies, practices, structures or any other facets of schools. Additionally, the

participants did not question themselves as teachers in terms of beliefs, practices, approaches,

interactions, styles that may also contribute to the achievement gap. When pushed further in the

interviews and focus groups, some participants acknowledged the inequity of schools and the

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negative schooling experiences of children of color, but detracted from racism as a central issue

by framing the discussion around poverty.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The intent of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions about diversity and the achievement gap through a critical lens in order to identify the ideologies that undergird their thinking and practices. Through their responses to the interview questions, the participants communicated their perceptions about diversity, diverse students, and how they view their roles as teachers in diverse, high-need and low-performing schools. The focus groups were structured to incite the participants' rationalizations of the achievement gap. Essentially, the focus groups acted as "think tanks," whereby the participants individually and collectively defined the achievement gap, identified its causes and proposed ways to address it. The analysis of the participants' written reflections on diversity and multiculturalism provided further insight into their perceptions about diversity and the achievement gap. This chapter will provide a response to the research questions and a summary of the findings. Further, it will draw upon the findings to provide recommendations for how teacher education programs can transform the pre-service teacher experience to better prepare teachers for working with diverse groups of students.

Summary of the Findings

It is important to state that the program was effective at inculcating the values set forth in relation to diversity, multicultural perspectives and critically reflective practice as defined by the program. The participants' definitions of diversity alone support this statement as they reflect the liberal approach to diversity and multiculturalism. However, because the program's approach was not critical, the participants, although prepared from the liberal framework to respect, tolerate and celebrate diversity, will not likely see their roles as counter-hegemonic teachers who through their actions will counter or perpetuate inequity and racism on daily basis in their classrooms and schools.

The participants expressed a general desire to make a difference in the lives of their students and to ensure their students achieve academic success. They held a broad perspective of diversity and acknowledged it as both a challenge and an asset. What became evident through my interactions with the participants was that while they hold positive intentions for students, their hegemonic ideologies will override their positive intentions. Further compounding this, and consistent with the literature, the participants have minimal experiences with cultures different from their own (Ladson-Billings, 2001) and operate on misconceptions and stereotypes that are characteristic of dysconscious racism (King, 1991). Without intervention, the participants' hegemonic ideologies manifested in their practices will perpetuate whiteness and undermine the success of their diverse students.

Also well-intentioned, the program endeavored to tackle social justice and promote the core values of diversity, multicultural perspectives and critically reflective practice. However, consistent with the literature, the program mirrors most teacher preparation programs approaching the education of historically marginalized students in technical and methods-focused ways that "frame schooling as politically neutral spaces and disconnected from the social, political, economic, and historical context in which they exist (Rodríguez, 2008). As a result, the participants have emerged from their preparation experience "having unconsciously absorbed, assimilationist, white supremacist, and deficit views of nonwhite and low-income students" (Bartolome, 2008, p. xv). The liberal multicultural framework on which the program is structured promoted a politically correct and "feel-good" approach to diversity that did not address power relations and structural inequities and fuels an illusion of racelessness, thereby maintaining the insidious nature of whiteness.

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Response to Research Questions

The first research question was "What are the perceptions that alternatively licensed teachers have about diverse students they teach in high-need and low-performing schools?" Essentially, this question targets the ideologies that undergird the participants thinking about diversity and diverse students. The analysis of the participants' written reflections and the interview/focus group transcripts revealed more than expected about the participants' ideologies, and respectively about their preparation experience. The achievement gap as a topic of discourse was especially effective at drawing out the underlying ideologies of the participants because it required them to deconstruct the layers of a phenomenon that cannot be easily explained or discussed without generating cognitive dissonance. The hegemonic ideologies that emerged throughout the participants' discourse were colorblindness, cultural deficiency, individualism, and meritocracy. Because the participants' hegemonic ideologies were not exposed or critiqued as an integral part of their preparation experience, they remain repressed and will likely hinder their effectiveness and in turn the success of their diverse students.

Throughout this study, I struggled with the question of whether the participants are aware of whiteness and conscious of their own hegemonic ideologies or whether whiteness is invisible to them and their hegemonic ideologies subconscious or dysconscious (King, 1991). A simplistic interpretation would be that because the participants did not mention race, racism or whiteness in their discussions of diversity and the achievement gap, they are ignorant of whiteness. Within this interpretation, the participants as naive beings who cannot be held responsible for their actions or be expected to work to dismantle the things that remain invisible to them. However, I believe it is much more complex than this. I do believe that the participants lack critical consciousness because of the way critical reflection and critically reflective practice

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were addressed within the program, where the focus was technical in nature versus an avenue to the development of critical consciousness. Additionally, the liberal framework of the program did not provoke the participants to think critically about power relations, structural inequities and whiteness, instead promoting the illusion of racelessness and a superficial stance on diversity as something "nice" that calls for celebration. However, because the participants' stances and assertions about diversity were not critiqued and challenged by each other or by me, it is difficult to come to a conclusion about whether or not they are cognizant of whiteness and their own hegemonic ideologies that perpetuate it through their practices. I believe that they engaged in Whiteness-At-Work to detract from issues of race and racism, but I don't know that they have the awareness that would make this conscious, strategic and intentional. Rather, I believe that they are accustomed to the whiteness-at-work that has become ingrained in the mainstream discourse about many of our societal challenges, including the achievement gap. As educators, they are bombarded with Whiteness-At-Work on a consistent basis, through the media and educational rhetoric of politicians, educational leaders, and reform initiatives that communicate a message of liberalism as the accepted standpoint. If educators take on this stance, they are assured a conflict-free existence in the illusion of a "nice field like education" (Ladson-Billings, 1998). If they choose to take on a counter-stance, they subject themselves to being vilified and marginalized. As new teachers learning to navigate within a system that is not intuitive to them, it is not likely that would be willing to take on a bold anti-racist stance, even if the program had exposed them to a deep analysis of whiteness.

While I do believe their intentions are positive, meaning, they want students to succeed, they lack in critical consciousness and have not gone through the psychological work that would move them beyond repression and denial of, and a political investment in, whiteness. They are

invested in a functionalist perspective of society and the educational system, which renounces them from problematizing the system thus reinforcing their deficit thinking. In making sense of the achievement gap from what they deem a deracialized standpoint, they view poverty as a sort of natural occurrence, rather than the result of racism. Even if the program had exposed them to whiteness and immersed them in an analysis of it, I suspect that many of them, as new and inexperienced teachers, would either choose not to put themselves out there or they would be very cautious as to how they communicated their stance. However, I believe that they have constructed an illusory view of the world, that maybe before the program could be construed as naiveté or the lack of a conceptual understanding of diversity and after the program evolved into a liberal perspective that serves to justify their illusory view of the world and to repress their acknowledgement of whiteness and their own investment in it. When faced with the realities of racism, they enact Whiteness-At-Work, which allows them to avoid conflict, discomfort, responsibility and guilt. In essence, they are engaging in Whiteness-At-Work as a way to preserve their illusion of racelessness because within this illusion their comfort remains undisrupted and their privilege intact. To admit to racism would reveal their involvement and require them to take responsibility and action in ways that may be counter beneficial to them. While well-meaning and good intentioned, these teachers are not prepared to serve as advocates for students of color through a conscious and intentional engagement in counter-hegemonic teaching practices.

According to May and Sleeter (2010), "Teachers still too often construct indigenous and other minoritized students in deficit terms, with inevitable negative consequences for their longer-term academic success" (p. 3). Consistent with the literature, every participant in this study pointed to deficits on the part of students, families and communities in their explanations

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of the achievement gap. It became evident that they view education from a functionalist

perspective, which detracts from the institutionalized racism that maintains the power relations

and structural inequities that underlie the achievement gap. From this perspective schools are

viewed as essentially just, fair, and equal and failure is attributed to the individual and not the

system. The major deficits cited by the participants were cultural differences, lack of value

placed on education, the absence of habits in the home that support academic excellence, lack of

parent and community involvement in education, and an overall apathy and lack of motivation to

achieve in an academic setting. The participants often alluded to the excuses students make for

their own failure when they have "every opportunity to be successful."

Also consistent with the literature, the participants have entered the profession with

"unexamined and uncontested notions of racelessness, individualism and false pretenses about

meritocracy" (Rodríguez, 2008, p. 304) that prevent them from problematizing or critiquing

schools as part of a racialized system of education. As such, they are prone to assimilating into a

culture that reinforces beliefs and practices that are counterproductive to the success of

historically marginalized groups (Rodríguez, 2008). Further, because they presume that students

are deficient, they will likely approach their work as compensation for what is lacking in the

student or the home, engaging in a "never-ending quest for the right strategy or technique to deal

with at-risk students" (Ladson-Billings, 1998), without problematizing the school (structures,

policies and practices) and themselves (identity, beliefs, and practices). Also reflective of deficit

ideology, parenting skills came into question as some of the participants made blatant

assumptions about what goes on in the homes of their students. These participants believe that

students, rather than reading and engaging in activities that would support their academic

success, are pre-occupied with non-academic activities such as watching television and playing

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video games. One of the participants also communicated her belief that mothers are not nurturing and do not read to their children, thus undermining their success in school. From this standpoint, the treatment is more time in school (viewed as a level playing field that provides opportunity) and less time in the home, which is viewed as deficient. The teacher's role then becomes a savior working to counter the bad effects of the home. Academic excellence and status attainment from this ideological perspective is linked to a home advantage in the form of family values and educational aspirations which children bring to the educational process (Lareau, 2000). The achievement gap becomes more of a socioeconomic or class issue, whereby the solution lies in the inculcation of the cultural capital needed for these students to be academically successful in school. Absent from the participants' rationalization that it is a home disadvantage (cultural deficiency) that creates the achievement gap is acknowledgement of the role that schools play. With a narrow focus on students through a deficit lens, the participants do not acknowledge how schools cater to students on the basis of cultural capital, defined as "instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed" (DiMaggio, 1982, pp. 190 citing Bourdieu, 1977). The way this plays out in the school setting is that teachers "communicate more easily with students who participate in elite status cultures, give them more attention and special assistance, and perceive them as more intelligent or gifted than students who lack cultural capital" (DiMaggio, 1982, p. 190).

In making sense of the achievement gap, the participants consistently compared students of color in terms of norms, values, family dynamics, and habits to the invisible norm of whiteness. Within this comparison, people of color are found lacking because their norms and values differ from white middle class norms and values (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Several of the participants referred to their own upbringing and the high value placed on education in the

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home as the primary reason they were successful in school and in life. They told similar stories of sitting down at the dinner table, being asked by their parents what they did in school that day and having a rigid and consistent schedule for completing homework. Conversely, they attributed the failure of students of color to home environments that are not in alignment with these common stories, which depict what they see as the acceptable norm and to which they attribute academic success. One of the participants couched her deficit rationalizations by acknowledging that parents want their children to be successful in school, but do not have the skills to support them. In her mind, the solution to the achievement gap lies in enlightening parents and equipping them with the correct habits and skills that promote achievement—essentially teaching them the ways of whiteness. In responding to the unjust policy of not allowing students to take textbooks home, another participant communicated her belief that "parents wouldn't know what to do with them [textbooks] anyway." Rather than questioning why her students do not have enough textbooks whereas students in other schools are able to keep a textbook at home and one at school, she persisted in justifying the policy from a deficit perspective.

Even when focusing on poverty as a primary contributor to the achievement gap, the participants upheld their deficit thinking, making assumptions about students and their families. For example, students and their parents were viewed as not caring about education because they had more important challenges to focus on (poverty, violence, and drugs). Within this rationalization, the diagnosis of failure is still tied to individual deficiencies, but there is an acknowledgement that the deficiencies stem from distraction caused by the challenges faced by families in poverty. While in a sense this perspective pardons students and their families from

failing to engage in activities at home that support academic success, it still characterizes them within a deficit framework.

While it was evident that the participants want all of their students to be successful, the deficit lens through which they perceive diverse students will likely counter their good intentions. Unless they engage in the critical reflection necessary to debunk their deficit thinking, they will continue to focus on what is wrong with diverse students versus problematizing and critiquing the educational system and taking on a role of changing inequitable structures, policies, and practices—in essence, dismantling whiteness.

Perceptions about Preparation: Liberal Multiculturalism

The second research question was, "How do teachers perceive their preparedness for teaching diverse students in high-need and low-performing schools?" In general, the participants believe that the program prepared them well for teaching diverse students in high-need and low-performing schools. They engaged in minimal critique of the program in terms of how it approached diversity and prepared them for teaching in diverse classroom settings. They clearly acknowledged that the program did not address race, racism or whiteness, and it was clear from the language of their discourse that critical race theory was not addressed within the program. Terms such as culturally responsive teaching and critical teaching/pedagogy were not present within the participants' discourse on diversity and the achievement gap.

As alternatively licensed teachers, the participants in this study have gone through an expedited preparation route that did not address diversity in the depth required to ensure they are prepared for the challenges of diverse, high-need and low-performing schools. The program was structured with the intent to tackle social justice issues and to develop the participants' understanding of diversity, multicultural perspectives and critically reflective practice. However,

because its approach was mired in liberalism, the participants did not engage in a critical analysis of whiteness and the type of critical reflection that leads to the development of critical consciousness and the unlearning of racism. As such, the participants maintain an illusion of race neutrality that will serve to reinforce their hegemonic ideologies. Moreover, this illusion will prevent them from problematizing and critiquing the very system that reproduces inequity through institutionalized structures, policies and practices that are built on an ideology of whiteness. These participants have entered classrooms not seeing (repressing and denying whiteness) and not being seen (repressing and denying their own power and privilege).

The language that permeated the discourse of the participants revealed much about the program's structure and approach to diversity. The participants' use of language, which included terms such as awareness, celebration, tolerance, respect and understanding were reflective of the liberal multicultural framework. In discussing the concept of diversity, the participants maintained a positive stance and did not problematize or critique it. Their language can be described as politically correct and superficial, as they did not mention race and placed more of an emphasis on differences in learning styles. When describing what they learned about diversity in the program, several of the participants responded that through the program they developed a broader view of diversity. The message was that diversity is not just about culture…it's much more than that, a sentiment that diminishes the importance of race. Additionally, the fact that they did not use terms such as critical pedagogy, cultural competence, culturally relevant teaching, cultural awareness, and anti-racism indicates that the program has not identified the theoretical framework that supports a comprehensive and systematic approach to preparing teachers in the area of diversity and multiculturalism.

Although the program addressed diversity, multicultural perspectives and social justice, it was evident that this was not addressed through a critical race theoretical framework. The way in which critical reflection was defined and then enacted through the program did address power relations and structural inequities and as such, did not serve to unmask and challenge the participants' prejudices, stereotypes, and misconceptions about diverse students. Self-awareness, as one of the goals of critical reflection, was spoken of in terms of ensuring the maintenance of respect and tolerance for diversity, thus removed from the sociopolitical construct of race and the framework of power relations and structural inequities. While a few of the participants articulated the importance of self-awareness, keeping biases and assumptions in check and ensuring that these do not impact students negatively, it was not evident that the participants were prompted to bring to the surface personal biases, assumptions, stereotypes, misconceptions and prejudices much less how to keep these in check so that they do not have a negative impact on their practices and in turn their students.

I do not believe they are prepared to act in the best interests of historically marginalized students. Again, although well-meaning, the participants have not developed the critical consciousness and race awareness necessary to act in equitable and liberating ways. They have not gone through the critical process of unlearning racism and, as such, they will continue to repress any notions of whiteness, further supporting their deficit perspectives of diverse students. While they have gained a conceptual understanding of diversity and what it means to be an effective teacher of diverse students, their understanding is mired in hegemonic ideologies that serve to fragment their knowledge and distort their structural consciousness of it. These hegemonic ideologies were not exposed and interrogated in the program and as a result the

participants did not experience ideological transformation or a re-coding of their knowledge that would disrupt their repression and denial of whiteness.

Essentially, the program's approach to diversity and multicultural education is consistent Cochran-Smith's (2004) assertion that:

> Few teacher education programs and departments have built into their ongoing operations and intellectual and organizational contexts that support teacher educators' learning about (and struggling with) issues of race, racism, diversity, and social justice in education. Part of what this means is learning to teach for social justice is partly a process of 'unlearning' racism and other problematic stances that are often buried in teacher education courses and curriculum. (p. 13)

The liberal multicultural framework of the program served to promote color and power evasiveness (Frankenberg, 1997). Disregarding power relations, dominance and oppression, it focused on humanistic affirmation in the form of acceptance, respect for, and celebration of difference. This approach, while championing equal educational opportunity, still supports the dominant culture and its hegemonic power (Jenks et al., 2001).

Perceptions about Race: Whiteness-At-Work

The third research question was, "How do alternatively licensed teachers perceive and construct meaning and understanding of the phenomena of race, ethnicity, racism, and whiteness and to what aspects of their preparation experience do they attribute these perceptions, meanings and understandings? One of the interview questions was, "What have you learned about the phenomena of race, ethnicity, racism, and whiteness both in your program of study and in your experience teaching in diverse and high-need/low-performing schools?" to which the participants' general response was that the program did not really address these phenomena

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specifically in the program. The participants exhibited race avoidance throughout their discourse and communicated a liberal stance on diversity and multiculturalism that was deracialized. Only one participant spoke in terms of race and addressed power relations, but indicated that she learned about critical race theory through her master's degree coursework.

Structured upon a liberal multicultural framework versus a critical multicultural framework, the program failed to address the terrain of whiteness, leaving it unnamed, unmarked and strategically invisible. Without a critical understanding of whiteness that permeates schools and fuels inequity and the resultant achievement gap, the participants make sense of diversity and the achievement gap from a colorblind ideology. Throughout their discourse the participants detracted from race through Whiteness-At-Work. Aligned with a liberal framework, the participants made statements like, "I don't see race," "I don't see color," and "I treat them all as individuals." Indicative of colorblind ideology, they view good teaching as good teaching regardless of who the students are. Colorblindness will prevent them from getting to the heart of inequity where they will find urgency and purpose in counter-hegemonic teaching. Not having engaged in the deep critical reflection required to expose hegemonic ideologies, the participants hold limited and distorted understandings about diversity and inequity that make it difficult for them to act in favor of truly equitable education. These limited and distorted understandings are characteristic of dysconscious racism (King, 1991) and will serve as a hindrance to their success and the success of their diverse students.

Mirroring the program's approach, the participants view diversity through a liberal multicultural framework. Reinforcing the ideologies of individualism and meritocracy, the participants view the system of education from a functionalist theoretical perspective positioning schools as neutral, fair and equal. From this perspective, failure with the system is attributed to

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deficits on the part of the individual versus the system, as the system is viewed as structured in the best interests of all. From this race-neutral perspective deficiency is viewed as an individual phenomenon and, as such, "instruction [the practice of teachers] is conceived as a generic set of teaching skills that should work for all students. When these strategies fail to achieve desired results, the students, not the techniques, are found to be lacking" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 19). It is this perspective that underlies the participants' assumption that good teaching is good teaching regardless of who the students are. Unless the participants' meritocratic notions are challenged and critiqued to provoke ideological transformation, they will continue to maintain an illusion of an equitable and just educational system further perpetuating the insidiousness of whiteness.

Throughout the interviews and focus groups, the participants engaged in Whiteness-At-Work as a discursive strategy that detracted from the centrality of race and racism. Through Whiteness-At-Work, the participants were able to effectively avoid the topic of race by redirecting the dialogue towards topics that were perceived as race neutral. Their broad and general definitions of diversity were reflective of an "equality of oppressions" paradigm (Abrams & Moio, 2009), diluted race among a multitude of other oppressions (i.e., gender, socioeconomic/class, language, sexuality), thereby diminishing its significance. In their interpretations of the achievement gap, the participants used poverty to detract from race. By doing this, they were able to explain the achievement gap from a deracialized standpoint.

Whiteness-At-Work also manifested itself in the participants' focus on their own disadvantages and lack of privilege. This shift in the conversation allowed the participants to categorize themselves as victims of oppression, abdicating them from any responsibility or guilt for inequity. This also prevents them from acknowledging their own privilege and the power

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that they have as teachers. When faced with inequity in their schools, the participants expressed

an acceptance of and a lack of control over the injustices their students endure on a daily basis.

Their disempowered positioning allowed them to separate themselves from the realities and in

some cases to reinforce a depersonalized view of students as objects versus subjects. An

example of this is Lori who in making sense of her students experience stated that they don't

experience things the same way she does and that injustice does not impact them in the same

way it would her, thus making it [injustice] okay. Her rationalizations allow her to accept the

dire circumstances of her students and prevent her from working to change these circumstances.

Whiteness-At-Work also materialized in the participants' broad and general definitions of

diversity. They articulated the perspective that diversity is not just about culture and race in

ways that detracted from power relations and structural inequities. Additionally, their definitions

and interpretations of diversity were framed solely in a positive light, which is reflective of a

kind of liberalism where "multiculturalism is viewed as a celebration of diversity and recognized

the importance of inclusion and participation, emphasizing difference, pluralism, and tolerance"

(Nylund, 2006, p. 40). Such a stance allows them to abdicate responsibility for an unjust and

inequitable system of education and focus more on the superficial aspects of diversity, such as

learning from each other, respecting each other, tolerating and celebrating difference, and living

harmoniously in a pluralistic society.

While the participants' discourse suggest that the program did foster a general sense of

the need for teachers to commit to a social justice agenda, the participants approach this

commitment from a deracialized perspective that places poverty at the core of the achievement

gap. Moreover, they view poverty as a natural consequence or one that exists only as a historical

legacy and not due to any current mechanisms. Inequity within this frame becomes a class issue

diminishing the centrality of race and racism. When the participants were confronted with race as the source of the achievement gap, they quickly redirected the topic to focus on poverty as the underlying issue. As a result of their Whiteness-At-Work, the participants were able to preserve their illusion of racelessness by focusing on a topic that was less divisive and confrontational, thereby alleviating any discomfort and sense of responsibility or power to act. The villain then becomes a classist society in which the participants exist within a shared space and sense of being victims of an unchanging reality. In this collective space, the participants can co-exist as whiteness remains hidden and unchallenged, giving it more power.

Through this study, it became clear that all of the participants whether white or of color, hold hegemonic ideologies that will assuredly hinder their effectiveness with diverse students. These ideologies were seemingly not forced to the surface in their preparation experience. And unless they encounter professional development structured to expose, interrogate and critique these ideologies as well as replace them with counter-hegemonic ones, they will remain repressed and a driving force behind their practices and interactions with students. While they invariably learned the importance of reflective practice for the purposes of improving upon the technical aspects of their work as teachers, they have not developed the ability to engage in deep critical reflection that would continue to support their development of critical consciousness.

A Needed Shift in Teacher Education

Despite demographic shifts and dramatic increases in the number of students of color, the majority of teachers continue to be white middle-class females (Banks, 2001; Bartolome, 2008; Coopersmith & Gruber, 2009; Cross, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001; National Education Association, 2003). In light of the racial mismatch and demographic imperative, it is critical that teachers be prepared to teach effectively in diverse, high-need and low-performing schools. If

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the most important factor influencing student learning is the teacher (Ding & Sherman, 2006; Haberman, 1995; Haskins & Loeb, 2007; Haycock, 1998; Sanders, 2000), a more critical view of teacher effectiveness is in order. Given the complex and dynamic nature of teacher effectiveness, it is imperative that teacher preparation transcend technical approaches that focus solely on the acquisition of knowledge and skills, without tackling ideologies and the impact they have on teachers' practices and in turn students.

At a bare minimum, teachers who will teach in the diverse and complex social contexts of high-need and low-performing schools should enter classrooms culturally competent and skilled in culturally relevant teaching strategies. However, to disrupt whiteness and dismantle institutionalized racism, teachers must achieve far more than mere cultural competence, where the notion of knowledge and teacher identity are fixed. What is required is that teachers achieve ideological transformation through the unlearning of racism that replaces hegemonic ideologies with counter-hegemonic ones. Unfortunately, given the recent pendulum shift towards standards-based, accountability models of education, it is unlikely that teachers will enter classrooms with even the bare minimum of cultural competency, as competencies related to diversity are sorely lacking in teacher education curriculum and state/national standards. The challenge is that:

> We have seen a major retrenchment of the principles of multiculturalism, in both
> education and wider public policy. In the United States, a rapidly growing standards and
> testing movement has replaced earlier attention to racial and ethnic diversity. A system
> of setting standards and measuring student performance based on them was cemented by
> passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, leading to pressure to raise test scores,
> which has turned the work of teachers into that of standardized curriculum technicians

and test managers (Valli et al., 2008). In this context, despite emphasis on efforts to close the 'achievement gap,' multicultural education has all but disappeared. (May & Sleeter, 2010, p. 1).

Especially in high-need and low-performing schools, teachers are viewed as technicians, and as such their preparation and professional development are limited to training them how to deliver pre-packaged and scripted curriculum, with minimal involvement in curriculum design and delivery. Teachers who act as uncritical consumers in a system that still operates on a banking model of education, proves to be a toxic combination for historically marginalized students of color who attend the most needy schools. The preservation of the banking structure that maintains structural inequities relies on uncritical educators who will not problematize, critique or challenge hegemonic structures, policies, and practices. It is this disempowerment of educators that essentially fuels a production –focused system of education, where teachers and students are objects rather than subjects, and as such are not the beneficiaries of a liberating and empowering education.

A driving force for dismantling institutional racism will be preparing critical educators who while cognizant of power relations and structural inequities approach their work in empowering and liberating ways and teach with the conscious intent to dismantle racism. Essentially, teacher educators are charged with much more than preparing teachers with the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are required by state and national competency frameworks and accreditation standards. Teachers must also emerge from the preparation experience with keen self-awareness and the ability to reflect on themselves as evolving pedagogues striving to improve not only their practices, but themselves as people who impact the lives of many on a daily basis.

Power relationships are central to the act of teaching as an intricate interaction between people. The work of teachers cannot continue to be viewed in ways that diminish the power teachers have over shaping the destinies of their students and in turn their families and communities. In the aftermath of No Child Left Behind where teachers are viewed as technicians rather than professionals who are trained to deliver scripted curriculum and teach to the test, this is a difficult task. However, teachers are significant players in a racialized society and through the everyday work of teaching they either perpetuate or counter whiteness. As such they cannot continue to exit teacher preparation programs with the illusion that their work is as simplistic an endeavor as merely transferring content to students based on set standards and benchmarks. Under this illusion, they lose sight of the sacredness and complexity of teaching that Parker Palmer (1998) captures in the following excerpt: "What a fool I was to imagine that I had mastered this occult art—harder to *divine than tea leaves* and impossible for mortals to *do even* passably *well*!" (p. 1). Far more then mindless and disempowered technicians, teachers as humans in all of their complexity bring their identity and their integrity with them to the teaching and learning experience and they shape the interactions they have with student in ways that are difficult to capture. In describing the importance of transcending technique, Palmer refers to the secret hidden in plain sight: *"*good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the ***identity*** and ***integrity*** of the teacher." (Palmer, 1998, p. 10).

The following excerpts from Palmer's book, *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*, capture the seriousness and intricate nature of teaching. His definition of identity relates the importance of knowing the self who teaches, and through a critical theoretical lens this includes a deep understanding of one's privilege and power in relation to that of one's students. A teacher must have a deep understanding of how her complex

self intersects with the complex lives of many within a racialized society and thereby maintaining or dismantling its structure. Teachers have the power to choose how their identity impacts society and should be ever cognizant of the influence they have. Palmer defines identity as

> An evolving nexus where all the forces that constitute my life converge in the mystery of self: my genetic makeup, the nature of the man and woman who gave me life, the culture in which I was raised, people who have sustained me and people who have done me harm, the good and ill I have done to others, and to myself, the experience of love and suffering—and much, much more. In the midst of that complex field, identity is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human. (Palmer, 1998, p. 13)

Further, his definition of integrity denotes the nature of the teacher as an evolving human being who has the power to make a conscious choice to approach the world authentically or superficially. Palmer defines integrity as the wholeness that exists within the nexus of one's identity that forms and reforms the direction of one's life.

> Integrity requires that I discern what is integral to my selfhood, what fits and what does not—and that I choose life-giving ways of relating to the forces that converge within me: do I welcome them or fear them, embrace them or reject them, move with them or against them? By choosing integrity, I become more whole, but wholeness does not mean perfection. It means becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am. (Palmer, 1998, p. 13)

From a critical race theoretical framework, authenticity means knowing your place in the world and not masking the reality of who you are and the world in which you exist. Teachers cannot

continue to approach their work *not seeing* (i.e., not acknowledging whiteness) and *not being*

seen (i.e., not acknowledging their own power and privilege). They must move towards a critical

multicultural framework of understanding.

Teacher education should be more than preparing teachers to be successful with diverse

groups of students, as being "successful" with diverse students also means teaching in

empowering and liberating ways and working to dismantle the power relations and inequity that

maintain the oppression of their diverse students. This requires a major shift in teacher education

from the dominant multicultural paradigm that is mired in liberal ideology and offers no change

in the current order (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) to one that is grounded in critical race

theory. Critical multicultural teacher education can serve as a tool in subverting racism, that

provides a more radical, antiracist conception of multiculturalism, and avoids the reductions

found in most cultural competence models (Nylund, 2006). Such a shift would require that as

part of their preparation experience, pre-service teachers engage in whiteness studies to

illuminate the "every day, invisible, subtle, cultural and social practices, ideas and codes that

discursively secure the power and privilege of white people, but that strategically remains

unmarked, unnamed and unmapped in contemporary society (Shome, 1996, p. 503). This shift

would also require that teacher education programs address the humanness of teaching and the

moral and ethical aspects of their work. Achieving this would require that liberalism be exposed

for what it is, an ideology that maintains the insidiousness of whiteness. Exposing and analyzing

whiteness is not sufficient. Teachers must also come to understand their moral and ethical

responsibility as players in a racialized system of education and realize the power that they have

to choose how to interact within the system as well as how their actions serve to perpetuate or

counter the hegemonic structures of the system.

In order for teachers to choose the role that they want to play within a racialized system of education, teachers must be critically consciousness, meaning that they have gone through deep critical reflection that served to expose and challenge their hegemonic ideologies. Critical reflection as an inward focused form of ideological critique can trigger a personal transformation where problematic ideologies are replaced with counter-hegemonic ones. Essentially, ideological transformation can be equated with the unlearning of racism. It is at this juncture that teachers may consciously choose their moral and ethical paths: whether to deny and repress conceptions of whiteness and continue to perpetuate and preserve it through their practices, or to acknowledge whiteness and work to dismantle it by enacting counter-hegemonic practices. The latter requires a deep commitment on the part of the teacher, and in making this commitment, the teacher subjects herself to a journey ridden in resistance and conflict, for no longer can she view her work through the rose colored glasses of the liberal framework that maintains an illusion of racelessness and the insidiousness of whiteness. This is where the identity and integrity of the teacher take effect and where the intellectual, spiritual and emotional aspects of teaching intersect. This is the place where teachers make a conscious decision whether to carry on as anti-racist teachers or to remain encapsulated in the cocoon of comfort and illusion supported by the denial and repression of whiteness.

The transition from the dominant, trivial, and superficial approaches to multicultural teacher education will not be an easy one for college and university administrators, teacher education faculty, pre-service and in-service teachers, and school administrators. Ladson-Billings (2010) captures well the challenges. A shift from liberal multiculturalism to critical multiculturalism requires that a critical race theoretical framework be applied to teacher education.

Adopting and adapting CRT as a framework for educational equity means that we will

have to expose racism in education *and* propose radical solutions for addressing it. We

will have to take bold and sometimes unpopular positions. We may be pilloried

figuratively or, at least vilified for these stands. Ultimately, we have may have to stand,

symbolically, before the nation as Lani Guinier and hear our ideas distorted and

misrepresented. We may have to defend a radical approach to democracy that seriously

undermines privilege of those who have so skillfully carved that privilege into the

foundation of the nation. We will have to adopt a position of consistently swimming

against the current. We run the risk of being permanent outsiders, but as Wynter (1992)

suggests, we must operate from a position of *alerity* or *liminality* where we may 'call into

question the rules of functioning on whose basis the United States conceptualizing itself

as a generically 'white' nation, and elaborate its present system of societal self-

knowledge (p. 19) But, I fear we (educational researchers) may never assume the liminal

position because of its dangers, its discomfort, and because we insist on thinking of

ourselves as permanent residents of a nice field like education. (Ladson-Billings, 1998,

p. 22)

Challenges

Teachers who are not critically conscious cannot enact critical multiculturalism in their

classrooms as a form of challenging power relations and dismantling racism. Absent from most

teacher education programs are curricula structured to develop in candidates an understanding of

the social construction of whiteness. Pre-service teachers must be exposed to a deep critique of

whiteness that "attempts to displace the normativity of the white position by seeing it as a

strategy of authority rather than an authentic or essential 'identity'" (Bhabha, 1998, p. 21). This

involves problematizing "the role that 'whiteness as the norm' plays in sustaining social privilege beyond that which is accorded marginalized others" (Guess, 2006, p. 650).

A limitation of this study was that faculty were not interviewed, due to the in-depth focus on the participants' perceptions and ideologies. I would surmise that the initial selection of faculty as well as their training and professional development are critical considerations for developing and successfully implementing critical multicultural teacher education programs. Adopting a critical multicultural framework not only requires critical analysis and revamping of curricula and syllabi, but intensive professional development of faculty who deliver these curricula. More importantly, the recruitment and selection of faculty can be especially challenging as the process must screen for individual values, beliefs, dispositions and ideology to ensure faculty themselves are critically conscious and are committed to anti-racist teacher education.

In order for faculty to promote and teach critical multiculturalism, they would need to have already gone through the process of unlearning racism and know how to promote and develop this process in pre-service teachers. Just as the teacher matters in public school setting, faculty matter in the realm of teacher education. The curriculum and content cannot stand on its own and critically conscious teacher education faculty must be at the helm in delivering the curriculum and creating the culture, environment and circumstances for the unlearning of racism to occur amongst groups of pre-service teachers. I suspect that right along with the participants in this study who are students in this program, the faculty hold the same liberal multicultural perspective of the program and harbor and thus support the same hegemonic ideologies. However, because I did not interview them as a part of this study, I cannot confirm my suspicions. I can only hypothesize that the participants' liberal perspective was reinforced

through the interactions they had with faculty, who have not achieved critical conscious or gone through the process of unlearning racism. If this indeed is the case, how can faculty who lack critical consciousness and are still repressing their own hegemonic ideologies expose and interrogate the hegemonic ideologies of their students and facilitate an analysis of whiteness that is integral to the participants development of critical and race consciousness?

Adding additional complexity to the challenge of implementing critically multicultural teacher education programs is that there must be buy-in at the highest administrative levels of higher education institutions. This would require a commitment on the part of college and university presidents, boards, and other administrators to anti-racist education. Essentially, a commitment to anti-racist education would need to be central to the mission and vision of an institution and not just to the teacher education department or program. Without the support from the top down, it would be difficult for a teacher education program to successfully implement a critical multicultural program for teachers. As resistant as public institutions are to change and given the insidious nature of whiteness, such a transformative program could not exist in traditional higher education institutions. Essentially a shift to critical multicultural teacher education would require drastic changes not only in policies and practices. It would require a shift in consciousness.

One proposition is that a critically multicultural teacher education program be developed as part of a critical studies program and outside of traditional teacher education. It would have to be developed from the ground up, beginning with the recruitment and selection of critically conscious faculty committed to anti-racist teacher education. These faculty would need to work collaboratively to develop the critical multicultural framework for the program as well as a

strong curriculum structured to engage teacher candidates in a critical analysis of whiteness and the unlearning of racism.

Future Research

My future research will focus on the implementation of critical multicultural initiatives in teacher education and the critical role that teacher education faculty play in preparing teachers in the areas of diversity of multiculturalism. Although this program had a conceptual framework that included the values of diversity, multicultural perspectives and critically reflective practice, how it was implemented by multiple faculty varied. For a conceptual framework to become the reality of the program, the faculty's philosophies and ideologies must be closely aligned with that framework. The preparation of critically conscious teachers who are able to engage counter-hegemonic practices relies heavily on the philosophies and dispositions of the faculty. Faculty who have adopted the mainstream hegemonic ideology will promote and foster it in their students, who in turn as teachers will mirror this in their classrooms. This cycle is an important consideration in the restructuring of teacher education programs to better prepare teachers to promote rather than undermine the success of diverse students.

A recommendation for this program is that it conducts a critical analysis of its curriculum, policies and practices to ensure they align with the conceptual framework of the program, which promotes diversity, multiculturalism and social justice. If the program is serious about preparing teachers to act in ways that will counter racism and work towards a more equitable system, they should consider structuring experiences for pre-service teachers to unlearn racism, which requires that teacher education be read as a racial text (Cochran-Smith, 2004), thereby shattering the illusion of racelessness, exposing whiteness and interrogating and critiquing the ideologies of teachers that serve to maintain power relations and structural

inequities. In considering the restructuring of its curriculum, courses, policies and practices, the program should keep the following aspects of critical multiculturalism borrowed from the field of social work in mind: "1) Recognizes the socio-historical construct of race, and its intersections with class, gender, nation, sexuality, and capitalism; 2) creates pedagogical conditions in which students interrogate conditions of 'otherness'; 3) challenges the idea of work as apolitical, transhistorical practice removed from the power struggles of history; and 4) makes visible the historical and social construction of whiteness" (Nylund, 2006). In essence, approaching teacher education from a critical multicultural framework moves teacher preparation beyond benevolent multiculturalism (Troyna, 1993), as deracialized discourse that fails to address "material issues of racism and disadvantage, and related forms of discrimination and inequality" (p. 7).

In closing, it is important to state that this program is not unlike most teacher education programs in the United States. Principals who hire graduates from this program report that they are well-prepared and are assets to their schools and students. The program has a strong reputation and holds good intentions around diversity, multiculturalism and social justice. In turn, the participants who are graduates from this program have good intentions for their students. I have no question that they have developed adequate mastery of the New Mexico teacher competencies and that they believe that they have the best interests of their diverse students at heart. However, the dilemma is that since they were never directly engaged in an anti-racist, anti-whiteness, critical multicultural curriculum, it is impossible to conclude how they would respond. Would they choose to swim upstream and against the current of whiteness as anti-racist teachers and risk being labeled and marginalized? Or, would they choose to swim downstream and with the current of whiteness, continuing to repress conceptions of whiteness

and their own hegemonic ideologies and existing comfortably in their illusion of *a nice field like*

education?" (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

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Appendix A: Individual Interview Questions

Interview Questions:
(Length 90 minutes)

1. What are the reasons you decided to become a teacher?

2. Describe your schooling experience.

   a) What were some of the lessons you learned from your experience as a student that have informed or shaped your approach to teaching?
   b) What aspects of your schooling experience promoted or hindered you as a learner?
3. What is your philosophy of teaching?
   a) What are you beliefs about teaching?
   b) What are you beliefs about learning?
   c) What is the purpose of schooling?

4. What drives your desire to remain in the teaching profession? What challenges make you question your decision to remain in the teaching profession?

5. Describe your work with diverse students in high-need/low-performing schools

6. Describe your beliefs about diversity and how these beliefs play out in your everyday teaching.

7. Describe you role as a teacher of diverse students?
   a) What challenges or obstacles do you face as a teacher of diverse students in a high-need school and low performing school?
   b) How prepared do you feel you are to work effectively with diverse students in a high-need and low-performing school?
   c) What aspects of your teacher preparation experience have helped or hindered you in terms of your effectiveness with teaching diverse students in high-need and low performing schools?

8. What have you learned about the phenomena of race, ethnicity, racism, and whiteness both in your program of study and in your experience teaching in diverse and high-need/low-performing schools?

9. What are the reasons for the achievement gap? How do you make sense of this phenomenon?

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

Timeframe: 2 hours 25 minutes

After viewing a 5 minute presentation on the achievement gap, participants will be asked to engage in discourse for a total of 2 hours and 20 minutes around the topic of the achievement gap. To allow all participants an opportunity to respond, each participant will be given 2 minutes each to respond to each question followed by an open forum opportunity for participants to engage in discourse. The following questions will provide the framework for the discourse. As the researcher, I will facilitate the discourse and may ask additional and more specific questions to probe participants (i.e. asking for clarification, presenting scenarios that probe participants to engage in analysis and apply their ideas, asking what if…questions).

Question	Timeframe: Individual Responses	Timeframe: Group Discourse	Total Time
1. What is your understanding of the achievement gap? What roles do race, racism, poverty, and systems/structures play if any in this phenomenon?	2 minutes per participant 20 minutes total	15 minutes	35 minutes
2. What do you see as the causes of the achievement gap? Of these causes you have identified, which would you highlight as major causes and which would you categorize as minor causes.	2 minutes per participant 20 minutes total	15 minutes	35 minutes
3. What role if any do teachers play in widening or closing the achievement gap?	2 minutes per participant 20 minutes total	15 minutes	35 minutes
4. What aspects of your preparation program have	2 minutes per participant 20 minutes total	15 minutes	35 minutes

prepared you to work with diverse students in high-need and low-performing schools?			

GUIDING PRINCIPALS FOR DISCUSSION:

- Only one person talks at a time.

- Confidentiality is assured. "What is shared in the room stays in the room."

- It is important for us to hear everyone's ideas and opinions. There are no right or wrong answers to questions – just ideas, experiences and opinions, which are all valuable.

- It is important for us to hear all sides of an issue – both the positive and the negative.

- It is important for everyone's ideas to be equally represented and respected, but it is ok to disagree (respectfully.)

FORMAT:

- You are the EXPERT…I'm here to learn from you
- Your participation is important (your voice)—everyone needs to have a voice
- Initial thoughts for each question (2 minutes max per person)
- Initial thoughts followed by dialogue
- Dialogue followed by summary thoughts
- Audio recorded: tapes to be destroyed after transcription and analysis (use of pseudonyms for participants, names mentioned, schools and any other identifying information.)

Appendix C: Models of Critical Reflection

The following visual emerged as a result of this study. This graphic depicts three different models of critical reflection. The first is representative of what I believe the participants experienced as candidates in this program. The second is a level above this base model that shows a progression towards a model of critical reflection that would prepare teachers to counter inequity and racism through their teaching practices. The third is a model of critical reflection that would prepare counter-hegemonic teachers who would work to transform education and schools to provide an equitable education for children of color.

	Reflection	Focus	Goal	Outcome	Teaching
MODEL 1	Critical Reflection	Technical/ Instructional Practice	General Competency	Continuous Improvement	Reflective Teaching
MODEL 2	Critical Reflection	Integration Issues of Equity and Social Justice	Cultural Competence	Cultural Sensitivity	Culturally Responsive Teaching
MODEL 3	Critical Reflection	Unlearning of Racism	Ideological Transformation	Critical Consciousness	Counter-Hegemonic Teaching

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